

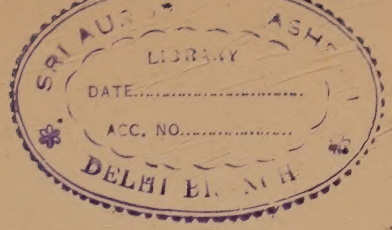


The ADVENT

*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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The Advent

*Be perfectly sincere and no victory will
be denied to you.*

THE MOTHER

The ADVENT

November 1948

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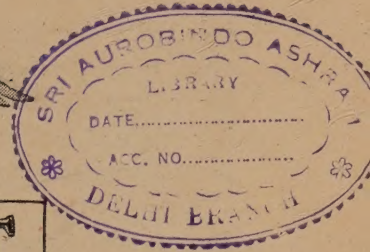
“ Mine is the labour of the battling gods :
Imposing on the slow reluctant years
The flaming will that reigns beyond the stars;
They lay the law of Mind on Matter’s works
And win the soul’s wish from earth’s inconscient force.”

SAVITRI BOOK VII, CANTO II





The **ADVENT**



The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo

EDITORIALS

PROCESS OF PURIFICATION

THERE are three well-marked stages in the process of the purification of nature and surrender to the Divine. When one has made up one's mind finally to take to the path of spiritual life and to turn one's back upon the life of ignorant nature, one enters at the outset into a phase of divided consciousness and life. It is the stage when one cries, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." One feels an inner aspiration and devotion and even freedom and purity and a wider consciousness, but actually in the practical world, he follows the old nature, acts under the pressure of Ignorance and the Ripus. You are a mundane man with profane habits—and yet within, when aloof, you are in contact with the deeper and larger breath of the Spirit. The next stage is one of external control and of modification of behaviour. You have the inner consciousness of the spirit grown strong in you and you are no longer a helpless prey to the physical outbursts of inferior nature: a kind of brake has been put upon the outgoing passions. Still at this stage the surges of passion are there within, inside the wall of control, as it were. The pressure and demand of the Spirit has brought about a deadlock in the ignorant movements of the outer nature, although the physico-vital and vital support behind has not been wholly purified and continues in its old way, expressing itself in veiled and sublimated acts and in dreams and imaginations. The vital support even when it does not express itself in grosser physical movements, even when it is self-contained, yet maintains its old *taste* for them. Finally, when this taste even

goes away (that is the suggestion in the beautiful and luminous phrase of the Gita, *rasavarjam*), then only one rises into the integral and unadulterated life of the Spirit. Till that final consummation happens, the period of interregnum is a great occasion for training and experience. It is of considerable interest also from the standpoint of occult knowledge.

There are two types—which mean two stages—of control. You can control your nature by the force of your will, as one does a wicked horse by means of the toothed bit. But this control is precarious and the clearing or purification effected is only skin-deep. At the slightest weakening of the will or a momentary lack of vigilance, you may find yourself in the very midst of a volcanic eruption of passions. Even otherwise, even if there happens no external outburst, the burden or pressure of the ignorant nature is always there and the struggle or tension, although thrown into the background, obstructs the nature, does not give it the free and spontaneous higher poise of the spirit. The other control comes from the inmost being, from the spiritual self itself: it is automatic and it is occult in its action and therefore naturally effective. When the Spirit, the Inner Control (*Antaryami*) works, it happens that even if the desires are there, the occasions for their satisfaction are withdrawn from you. As the Mother says, some people who are destined for the spiritual life lose all earthly props whenever they wish to lean upon them, they lose their endeared objects whenever they are eager to cherish them. At a certain stage of the growth of the inner consciousness, the demand of the soul makes it impossible for the vital (or physico-vital), so far as it is unpurified and unprepared, to secure its objects: even if the lips yearn, the cup is taken away. The circumstances themselves yield to the pressure of the inner being and conspire, as it were, to withhold and remove all dangerous contacts. The being has not to say, “Lead me not into temptation”, for the temptations by themselves slip away. That is the earlier poise of the interregnum we are describing; the next poise comes when the wish-impulses, the subjective vibrations also melt and disappear. Then there appear no such thing as temptations. Objects, events, circumstances that might have acted in that role come and go, but the being remains indifferent and unruffled, because suffused with the delight of another contact. The detachment from the worldly is secure and absolute because the being has found its attachment to the Divine. That is the beginning of the integral spiritualisation of the nature.

THE SANCTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The sanctity of the individual, the value of the human person is one

of the cardinal articles of faith of the modern consciousness. Only it has very many avatars. One such has been the characteristic mark of the group of philosophers (and mystics) who are nowadays making a great noise under the name of Existentialists. The individual personality exists, they say, and its nature is freedom. In other words, it chooses, as it likes, its course of life, at every step, and creates its destiny. This freedom, however, may lead man and will inevitably lead him, according to one section of the group, to the perception and realisation of God, an infinite in which the individual finite lives and moves and has his being; according to others, the same may lead to a very different consummation, to Nothingness, the Great Void, Nihil. All existence is bounded by something unknown and intangible which differs according to your luck or taste,—one would almost say to your line of approach, put philosophically, according either to the positive pole or the negative, God or Non-existence. The second alternative seems to be an inevitable corollary of the particular conception of the individual that is entertained by some, viz., the individual existing only in relation to individuals. Indeed the leader of the French school, Jean-Paul Sartre—not a negligible playwright and novelist—seems to conceive the individual as nothing more than the image formed in other individuals with whom he comes in contact. Existence literally means standing out or outside (*ex + sister*), coming out of oneself and living in other's consciousness—as one sees one's exact image in another's eye. It is not however the old-world mystic experience of finding one's self in other selves. For here we have an exclusively level or horizontal view of the human personality. The personality is not seen in depth or height, but in line with the normal phenomenal formation. It looks as though, to save personality from the impersonal dissolution to which all monistic idealism leads, the present conception seeks to hinge all personalities upon each other so that they may stand by and confirm each other. But the actual result seems to have been not less calamitous. When we form and fashion each other, we are not building with anything more substantial than sand. Personalities are thus mere eddies in the swirl of cosmic life, they rise up and die down, separate and melt into each other and have no consistency and no reality in the end. The freedom too which is ascribed to such individuals, even when they feel it so, is only a sham and a make-believe. Within Nature nothing is free, all is mechanical law—Karma is supreme. The Sankhya posits indeed many Purushas, free, lodged in the midst of Prakriti, but there the Purusha is hardly an active agent, it is only an inactive, passive, almost impotent, witness. The Existentialist, on the contrary, seeks to make of the individual an active agent; he is not merely *being*, embedded or merged in the original *Dasein*, mere existence,

but *becoming*, the entity that has come out, stood out in its will and consciousness, articulated itself in name and form and act. But the person that stands out as part and parcel of Prakriti, the cosmic movement, is, as we have said, only an instrument, a mode of that universal Nature. The true person that informs that apparent formulation is something else.

To be a person, it is said, one must be apart from the crowd. A person is the "single one", one who has attained his singularity, his individual wholeness. And the life's work for each individual person is to make the crowd no longer a crowd, but an association of single ones. But how can this be done? It is not simply by separating oneself from the crowd, by dwelling upon oneself that one can develop into one's true person. The individuals, even when perfect single ones, do not exist by themselves or in and through one another. The mystic or spiritual perception posits the Spirit or God, the All-self as the background and substance of all the selves. Indeed, it is only when one finds and is identified with the Divine in oneself that one is in a position to attain one's true selfhood and find oneself in other selves. And the re-creation of a crowd into such divine individuals is a cosmic work in which the individual is at best a collaborator, not the master and dispenser. Anyway, one has to come out of the human relationship, rise above the give-and-take of human individuals—however completely individual each one may be—and establish oneself in the Divine's consciousness which is the golden thread upon which is strung all the assembly of individuals. It is only in and through the Divine, the Spiritual Reality and Person, that one enters into true relation and dynamic harmony with others.

The truth of the personality is not to be found in its horizontal, but vertical dimension. The Existentialist speaks of the existence (standing out) of the human person as a transcendence. But real transcendence is not so much in coming out as in going up and beyond. To be outside oneself is not always to transcend oneself: to be above oneself is the real transcendence. Man is a true and free person only when he is lord of Prakriti, dominating and commanding Nature, when he is identified with Ishwara, the supreme Person, the Master, and becomes an incarnate will and consciousness of His. The soul in ignorance and in ignorant relation with others must rise and envisage its archetype in the Supreme Divine, as a free formulation of an Idea-Force of the Infinite.

If we do not keep in view this vertical transcendence and confuse it with immanence, we are likely to arrive at queer conclusions, as for example, one Existentialist says: polarity being an essential truth of the reality, the law of day and night is an eternal and immutable law and therefore, God cannot subsist as pure love; there must be also anger in him. In fact, God

too is a becoming God as the human being. The limitation of such a view, characteristically Germanic and intellectual, is evident.

THE REVEALER AND THE REVELATION

How the horizontal view limits and maims one's spiritual perception is further illustrated in the case of the famous Gloomy Dean. Dean Inge is a divine and as spiritual a person as one can hope to be in the modern world. He has however voluntarily clipped his wings and in the name of a surer rational knowledge and saner spirituality prefers a lower flight among known, familiar and nameable ranges to a transcendent soaring in mystic regions beyond. He has made a somewhat trenchant distinction between the Revelation and the Revealer. He says we can know God only by his qualities: what else he is, if anything, beside his qualities none can define. In the words of the poet

These are His works and His veils and His shadows;
But where is He then? by what name is He known?

According to the Dean the qualities themselves are God, the living God whom one can worship. The True, the Good and the Beautiful—the Hellenic trinity he adores more than the Holy Trinity. "The God of religion is rather the revelation than the revealer. The source of revelation cannot be revealed: the ground of knowledge cannot be known" (*Mysticism in Religion* by Dean Inge, p. 155). This, one might say, almost echoes the Upanishadic mantra, "How can one know the knower.?" (*Vijñātāram are kena vijāniyat.*) The Upanishad says indeed that he who thinks he knows does not certainly know, but he who says he knows not is the one who knows; he knows who knows not, he knows not who knows. This simply means that God, the supreme Reality, is apprehended in and through other channels than mind and reason. It is a commonplace of spiritual experience that the Spirit is directly, immediately realisable, although its indirect approaches are walled in by a thousand appearances. A direct non-rational experience is not however something vague, nebulous, inarticulate; it is even more concrete, precise and tangible than a sense experience or a rational idea. Not only so, a suprarational knowledge can be grasped and presented by the intellect if it is purified and illumined. A brain mind under the sway of the senses and the outgoing impulse is an obstacle: it disturbs and prevents the higher Light. But passive and transparent it can be a faithful mirror, a

docile instrument and channel. That is why the Upanishad says in the first instance that the supreme Reality cannot be seized by the reason, but in another context, it declares that the mind, the intelligence too has to hold and realise the same. Normally intellect acts as a lid, but it can also be a reflector or projector.

One knows the Revealer for one becomes it. Knowledge by identity is the characteristic of spiritual knowledge. If one keeps oneself separate and seeks to apprehend the Divine as an object outside, the Divine escapes or is caught only by the trail it leaves, its echoes and shadows, its apparent qualities and attributes. But one with the Divine, the being realises and possesses it in full consciousness, the Revealer reveals himself as such (*vr̥ṇute tanum swām*) and not merely in or as his phenomenal formulations.

EVOLUTION OR SPECIAL CREATION

The point is still being debated and, it seems, is still debatable whether evolution is truly the fact behind the origin of species or is it special creation. The latter, we know, was the old-world pre-Copernican theory advocated by theologians and religious minds. It was thoroughly discredited and demolished by the new illumination that Science brought in with the nineteenth century. Till lately it was considered as a pure superstition and to be its advocate would be nothing but blind bigotry. But evidently things in Nature are not so simple; what at one time is brushed aside as a meaningless futility comes back later with a meaning and suggestiveness and truth of reality. We were once laughing at the corpuscular theory of light advocated by the great Newton and putting on a patronising air at the frailty of an otherwise mighty intelligence. But the tables are now turned and we accept it as an undoubted fact when Planck says today that a light ray consists also of particles (*quanta*) of light. Similarly if in some scientific quarter a doubt has arisen as to the absolute and exclusive truth of the principle of evolution and if the old conception of special creation is exhumed for fresh consideration, well, one should not be astonished at the turn over.

The most serious lacuna in the concept of evolution, at least in the Darwinian form of it, is, as is well-known, the missing link. The transition stage between one form of life and another, between one species and its higher evolvee is always absent, has left no trace of any kind and it is a matter of any man's guess. So the theory of mutation, *saltum*, sudden change, has been advanced. But that only restates the fact, clinches the matter, but

does not explain it. If a sudden and thorough change is possible, if one object can be transformed into something quite different and unpredictable, one can as well call it special creation. That would, some might say, be facing the fact squarely.

According to the Yogic or occult view of things, however, the two conceptions that human mind sets against each other need not be and are not contradictory. Indeed both are true and both are factors working out the progress of life. Evolution is a movement upward, the urge of consciousness to grow and expand and rise to a higher and greater articulation: the change follows a scale of degrees. But there comes a point in the progressive march when a change of degree means a change of kind and the phenomenon presents itself as a sudden, unforeseen mutation. This is due to the fact that there happens at the moment, in answer to a last call as it were from below, a descent of consciousness from the higher into the lower. All the grades of being or consciousness are always there in the cosmic infinity, only it is a matter of gradual manifestation in the physical world. The higher scales are kept in the background, the march of life starts from the lowest, the material rung. One by one they manifest or descend, formulate themselves in the lower as these grow and rise and get ready to receive the descent. The gap or missing link means the irruption of a new principle or mode of consciousness, the bursting of the cocoon, as it were, at the end of the period of gestation in the previous mode. Thus we can say that in the beginning there was only Matter and Matter was being churned until a point of tension or saturation was reached when Life precipitated and became embodied and evident in Matter. In the same way, out of a concentrated incubation that Life underwent, it brought down Mind from the hidden mind-plane and the vegetable kingdom gave birth to the animal. Latterly when Intelligence and self-consciousness descended, it was Man that appeared on earth.

Looked at from below, as the lower marches forward and upward, the scene presents itself as Evolution, growth, Nature's gradual unfolding of herself: looked at from above, as the higher seems poised and descends when the time and occasion are ready, creation appears as a series of special intervention. Both movements are facts of Nature and implement each other.

SOUL OF SONG

I HAVE been quiet a long while
 To fill my singing smile
 With a magic beyond the lips of man.
 And very quiet will I be
 After the burst of minstrelsy
 To find at the close
 The light with which my tune began.

Glowing behind
 The singer's mind,
 A mystery journeys forth to meet
 Across the rapture of rhythmic feet
 Its own unplumbed repose.
 Come, then, O listeners, with a tranquil mood
 To feel far more than the loud heart knows;
 Or else the King who moves through the common word
 Shall never be heard
 And keep unseen the strange infinitude
 He bears above our mental woes,
 The purple of his dream divine.
 Look deep for his true royalty's sign:
 Haloed with hush he enters, corona'd with calm he goes!

AMAL

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

IN the way of *ahaituki bhakti*, everything can be made a means—poetry and music, for instance, become not merely poetry and music and not merely even an expression of Bhakti, but themselves a means of bringing the experience of love and Bhakti. Meditation itself becomes not an effort of mental concentration, but a flow of love and adoration and worship.

* * *

The very object of Yoga is a change of consciousness—it is by getting a new consciousness or by unveiling the hidden consciousness of the true being within and progressively manifesting and perfecting it that one gets first the contact and then the union with the Divine. Ananda and Bhakti are part of that deeper consciousness, and it is only when one lives in it and grows in it that Ananda and Bhakti can be permanent. Till then, one can only get experiences of Ananda and Bhakti, but not the constant and permanent state. But the state of Bhakti and constantly growing surrender does not come to all at an early stage of the sadhana; many, most indeed, have a long journey of purification and Tapasya to go through before it opens, and experiences of this kind, at first rare and interspersed, afterwards frequent, are the landmarks of their progress. It depends on certain conditions, which have nothing to do with superior or inferior Yoga capacity, but rather with a predisposition in the heart to open, as you say, to the Sun of the Divine Influence.

* * *

Absence of love and fellow-feeling is not necessary for nearness to the Divine; on the contrary, a sense of closeness and oneness with others is a part of the divine consciousness into which the sadhak enters by nearness to the Divine and the feeling of oneness with the Divine. An entire rejection of all relations is indeed the final aim of the Mayavadin, and in the ascetic Yoga an entire loss of all relations of friendship and affection and attachment to the world and its living beings would be regarded as a promising sign of advance towards liberation, *moksha*; but even there, I think, a feeling of oneness and unattached spiritual sympathy for all is at least a penultimate

stage, like the compassion of the Buddhist, before the turning to Moksha or Nirvana. In this Yoga the feeling of unity with others, love, universal joy and Ananda are an essential part of the liberation and perfection which are the aim of the sadhana.

On the other hand, human society, human friendship, love, affection, fellow-feeling are mostly and usually—not entirely or in all cases—founded on a vital basis and are ego-held at their centre. It is because of the pleasure of being loved, the pleasure of enlarging the ego by contact and penetration with another, the exhilaration of the vital interchange which feeds their personality that men usually love—and there are also other and still more selfish motives that mix with this essential movement. There are of course higher spiritual, psychic, mental, vital elements that come in or can come in; but the whole thing is very mixed even at its best. This is the reason why at a certain stage with or without apparent reason the world and life and human society and relations and philanthropy (which is as ego-ridden as the rest) begin to pall. There is sometimes an ostensible reason—a disappointment of the surface vital, the withdrawal of affection by others, the perception that those loved or men generally are not what one thought them to be and a host of other causes; but often the cause is a secret disappointment of some part of the inner being, not translated or not well translated into the mind, because it expected from these things something which they cannot give. It is the case with many who turn or are pushed to the spiritual life. For some it takes the form of a Vairagya which drives them towards ascetic indifference and gives the urge towards Moksha. For us, what we hold to be necessary is that the mixture should disappear and that the consciousness should be established on a purer level (not only spiritual and psychic but a purer and higher mental, vital, physical consciousness) in which there is not this mixture. There one would feel the true Ananda of oneness and love and sympathy and fellowship, spiritual and self-existent in its basis but expressing itself through the other parts of the nature. If that is to happen there must obviously be a change; the old form of these movements must drop off and leave room for a new and higher self to disclose its own way of expression and realisation of itself and of the Divine through these things—that is the inner truth of the matter.

I take it therefore that the condition you describe is a period of transition and change, negative in its beginning, as these movements often are, at first, so as to create a vacant space for the new positive to appear and live in it and fill it. But the vital, not having a long continued or at all sufficient or complete experience of what is to fill the vacancy, feels only the

loss and regrets it even while another part of the being, another part even of the vital, is ready to let go what is disappearing and does not yearn to keep it. If it were not for this movement of the vital (which in your case has been very strong and large and avid of life) the disappearance of these things would, at least after the first sense of void, bring only a feeling of peace, relief and a still expectation of greater things. What is intended in the first place to fill the void was indicated in the peace and joy which came to you as the touch of Shiva—naturally, this would not be all but a beginning, a basis for a new self, a new consciousness, an activity of a greater Nature; as I told you, it is a deep spiritual calm and peace that is the only stable foundation for a lasting Bhakti and Ananda. In that new consciousness there would be a new basis for relations with others; for an ascetic dryness or isolated loneliness cannot be your spiritual destiny, since it is not consonant with your Swabhava which is made for joy, largeness, expansion, a comprehensive movement of the life-force. Therefore do not be discouraged; wait upon the purifying movement of Shiva.

* * *

Emotion is a good element in Yoga; but emotional desire becomes easily a cause of perturbation and an obstacle.

Turn your emotions towards the Divine, aspire for their purification; they will then become a help on the way and no longer a cause of suffering.

Not to kill emotion, but to turn it towards the Divine is the right way of the Yoga.

But it must become pure, founded upon spiritual peace and joy, capable of being transmuted into Ananda. Equality and calm in the mind and vital parts, an intense psychic emotion in the heart can perfectly go together.

Awake by your aspiration the psychic fire in the heart that burns steadily towards the Divine—that is the one way to liberate and fulfil the emotional nature.

* * *

SRI AUROBINDO

A DEFENCE OF INDIAN CULTURE *

(2)

THE question whether Indian culture has a sufficient power for the fortifying and ennobling of the normal human life, a pragmatic, non-ascetic, dynamic value, a power for expansion of life as well as a power for control of life, is one of central importance. For if, as certain critics pretend, it has nothing of this kind to give us, then whatever its other cultural greatness, it cannot live; it becomes a cis-Himalayan hot-house splendour which could flourish in a peninsular seclusion, but must perish in the keen and arduous air of the modern struggle of life. No anti-vital culture can survive: a civilisation void of strong vital stimulus and motive, too intellectual or too ethereal must languish for want of sap and blood. A culture to be permanently, wholly serviceable to man, must give him something more than some kind of transcendental uprush towards an exceeding of all life-values; it must do more than adorn with a great curiosity of knowledge, of science, of philosophic enquiry or a rich light and blaze of art, architecture, poetry the long stability and orderly well-being of an old, ripe and humane society. All this Indian culture did in the past to a noble purpose. But it must satisfy too the tests of a progressive Life-power. There must be some inspiration for the terrestrial endeavour of man, an object, a stimulus, a power and a will to live. Whether or not our end is silence and Nirvana, a spiritual cessation or the material death, that the world itself is a mighty labour of a Life-Spirit and man its crown on earth or the hero of its endeavour is a thing that is inspiringly certain. A great culture must see this truth in some fullness and give it some conscious and ideal power of self-effectuation. To give a stable base to life is not enough, to adorn it not enough, to shoot up sublimely to summits beyond life not enough; the greatness and growth of man on earth must be its equal care. Imperfection and failure will dog any missing of this great intermediate reality.

Our critics will have it that the whole body of Indian culture bears the stamp of just such a failure. The Western impression is that it is metaphysical and other-worldly system turned by a depressing sense of the unreality of life or an intoxication of the Infinite from the nobility,

* A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture (Vol. V, 472, 1919)

weakness and greatness of human effort and aspiration. Its philosophy may be sublime in speculation, its religious spirit fervent, its ancient social system strong, symmetrical and stable, its literature and its art good in their own way, but the salt of life, will, power, a living endeavour, is absent. This new journalistic Apollo, our archer who is out to cleave the python coils of Indian barbarism, abounds in outcries in this sense. But, if that is so, evidently India can have done nothing great, contributed no inaugurating power to human life, produced no men of mighty will, no potent personality, no strong significant human lives, no vital human figures in art and poetry. And that is what our devil's advocate tells us in graphic phrases. He tells us of a general undervaluing in the religion and philosophy of life and endeavour, life conceived as a shoreless expanse in which generations rise and fall as helplessly and purposelessly as waves in mid-ocean, the individual life everywhere dwarfed and depreciated, one solitary great character, Gautama Buddha, who "perhaps never existed," the sole contribution to the world's pantheon, and for the rest a pale featureless Asoka, the characters of drama and poetry lifeless exaggerations or puppets of supernatural powers, an art empty of life and reality,—this is the whole dull, drab, effete, melancholy picture of Indian civilisation. No power of life in religion or in philosophy, no breath of life in history, no colour of life in art and poetry, that it appears is the blank result of Indian culture. Whoever knows anything about the matter, has seen at first-hand the literature, followed the history, studied the civilisation, can see that this is a misrepresentation, a caricature, an absurdity and a falsity. But it is an extreme and violent way of putting an impression often given. As before, we must see why different eyes see the same object in such different colours. We find again the same primary misunderstanding. India has lived and lived richly, splendidly, greatly, but with a different will in life from Europe. Her idea and her plan have been peculiar to her temperament, original and unique, and therefore difficult to seize and easily open to hostile misrepresentation.

Three powers we must seize in order to judge the life-value of a culture; the power of the conception of life, the power of the forms, types, rhythms given to life, the inspiration, vigour, vital execution of the power in the actual lives of men and the life of the community. The European conception of life is one with which we in India are now very familiar, because our present thought and effort are filled and obscured with its presence or its shadow; we have been trying to assimilate it, even to shape ourselves, —our political, our economical, outward self has been especially dominated, —into some imitation of its form and rhythm. The European idea is the

conception of a Force manifesting itself in the material universe and a Life in it of which man is almost the whole meaning,—in spite of the recent stress of Science on a mechanical Nature,—and in man an effort to arrive at some light, harmony of understanding and ordering reason, efficient power, adorning beauty, strong utility, economical well-being. The free power of the individual ego and the organised will of the corporate ego are the great forces which this life needs for its flowering; therefore the development of individual personality and organised efficient national individuality are of the first importance to the European ideal. They have sometimes run riot and much of the restless and often violent vividness of the historic stir and literary and artistic vivacity of Europe is due to their powerful colours. The enjoyment of life and force and egoistic passion and satisfaction is a constant motive, a loud and insistent strain. But there is the other opposite effort to govern life by reason, science, ethics, art, a restraining and harmonising utility. At different times different powers have taken the lead. Christian religiosity has come in and added new tones, modified some, deepened other tendencies. Each age and period has increased the wealth and helped the complexity and greatness of the conception. At present the sense of the corporate being dominates, the idea of a great intellectual and material progress, an ameliorated state of the political and social human being governed by science, intelligent utility, liberty, equality, organisation, efficiency, general well-being. The endeavour has become too outward and mechanical, but some renewed power of a more humanistic idea is trying to beat its way in and man may perhaps before long refuse to be conquered by his apparatus and tied on the wheel of his own triumphant machinery: we must not lay too much emphasis on what may be a passing phase. The broad permanent conception of life remains and it is in its own limits a great and invigorating conception.

But the Indian conception of life starts from a deeper centre and moves on less external lines to a very different objective. The peculiarity of the Indian eye of thought is that it sees or searches everywhere for the Spirit, and the peculiarity of the Indian will in life is that it feels itself to be still unfulfilled, not in touch with perfection, not justified in any intermediate satisfaction so long as it has not found and does not live in the truth of the Spirit. Its idea of the world, of Nature, of existence is not physical, but psychological and spiritual. Spirit, soul, Consciousness are not only greater than inconscient matter and force, but they precede and originate, and force and matter cannot exist without them. The Force that creates the world is a conscious will or an executive power of the Spirit; the material universe is only a form and movement of the Spirit. Man himself is not

a life and mind born of and eternally subject to physical Nature, but a spirit using life and body. It is an understanding faith in this conception of existence and the attempt to live it out and get from the materialised and into a spiritual consciousness which constitutes the much-talked of Indian spirituality. It is evidently very different from the European idea, different even from the form given by Europe to the Christian conception of life. But it does not mean that Indian culture concedes no reality to life and follows no material or vital aims and satisfactions. Nor can it be contended that such a conception of existence can give no powerful and inspiring motive to the human effort of man. If matter, mind, life, reason, form are only powers of the spirit and valuable not for their own sake, but because of the Spirit within them,—*ātmārtham*, for the sake of the Self, says the Upanishad, and this is certainly the Indian attitude to these things,—that does not depreciate them or deprive them of their value. On the contrary it enhances and increases a hundredfold their significance. Form and body become of an immense importance when they are felt to be instinct with the life of the Spirit and a support for the rhythm of its workings. And human life was held by ancient Indian thought to be no vile and unworthy existence, but the greatest thing known to us, desired even, the Purana bodily says, by the gods in heaven. The deepening and raising of its richest or its most potent energies is the means by which the spirit proceeds to its own self-discovery. Mind and reason heightening to their greatest lights and powers make embodied life capable of opening to all the greatest light and power of the individual, universal and transcendent being. These are no sterilising and depressing ideas; they exalt and divinise the life of man.

The dignity of human existence, given to it by the thought of the Vedantic and the classical ages of Indian culture, exceeded anything conceived by the noblest western idea of humanity. Man is a spirit veiled in the works of energy and moving to self-discovery. He is a soul growing in Nature to self, a divinity and eternal existence, a wave of the God-ocean, an inextinguishable spark of the supreme Fire, identical even in reality with the ineffable Transcendence from which he came, greater even than the godheads he worships. The natural half-animal being which he chooses for a while to seem is not his whole or his real being. To find his real and divine Self, to exceed his outward, apparent, natural self, is the greatness of which he alone of beings is capable. He has the spiritual capacity to pass to a supreme and extraordinary pitch of manhood, and that is the first aim which Indian culture proposes to him, to live no more in the first crude type of an undeveloped humanity, *na yathā prākṛto janāḥ*, but to become a perfected semi-divine man. But he can do more, become one with God,

one self with the Spirit of the universe, one with a Self that transcends the universe. To be shut up in his ego is not his perfection; he can become one with others, with all beings, a universal soul, one with the supreme Unity. To aspire to that perfection and transcendence through his mind, reason, thought and their illuminations, his heart and its unlimited power of love and sympathy, his will, his ethical and dynamic being, his aesthetic sense of delight and beauty or through an absolute spiritual calm, largeness and peace, is the high ultimate sense of his humanity. This is that spiritual liberation and perfection of which Indian thought is so full and which appears to it, however high and arduous, yet in a way quite near, possible and normal to spiritual realisation, but of which the positivist Western mind finds it difficult to form a living and intelligible idea,—the status of the *siddha*, *bhāgvata*, *mukta*. In ancient Europe there was some approach made to it by the Stoics, Platonists, Pythagoreans; it has often been envisaged or pursued by a few rare souls; it is now percolating into the Western imagination, but more as yet by poetry and certain aspects of general thought than by philosophy and religion. But the distinction of Indian culture is to have seized on it, kept it a living and practicable thing, sounded all the ways to this spiritual way of perfect existence and made it the common highest aim and universal spiritual destiny of every human being.

The value of the Indian conception of life must depend on the relations and gradations by which this perfection is connected with our normal living. Put over against the latter without any connection, without any gradations leading up to it, it would either be a high unattainable ideal or the detached remote passion of a few exceptional spirits, or discourage the springs of our natural life by the too great contrast between this spiritual being and natural being. Something of the kind has happened in later times and given some room for the current Western impression about the exaggerated asceticism and other-worldliness of Indian religion and philosophy. But we must not be misled by the extreme over-emphasis of certain tendencies. To get to the real meaning of the Indian idea of life we must go back to its best times and look not at this or that school of philosophy or at some side of it, but at the totality of the ancient philosophical thinking, religion, literature, art, society. The Indian conception in its soundness made no such mistake; it did not imagine that this great thing can or even ought to be done by some violent, intolerent, immediate leap. Even the most extreme philosophies do not go so far. Whether the workings of the Spirit in the universe are a reality or only a half-reality, self-descriptive Lila or illusory Maya, whether it be an action of the infinite

Energy, Shakti or a figment of some secondary paradoxical consciousness in the Eternal, Maya, life as an immediate reality is nowhere denied by any school of Indian thinking. Indian thought recognised that the normal life of man has to be passed through conscientiously, developed with knowledge, its forms perused, interpreted, fathomed, its values worked out, possessed and lived, its enjoyments taken on their own level, before we can go on to self-existence or a supra-existence. The spiritual perfection which opens before man is the crown of a long, patient, millennial out-flowering of the spirit in life and nature. This belief in a gradual spiritual progress and evolution is the secret of the almost universal Indian acceptance of the truth of reincarnation. By millions of lives² in inferior forms the secret soul in the universe, conscious even in the inconscient, *cetana acetaneṣu*, has arrived at humanity: by hundreds, thousands, perhaps millions of lives man grows into his divine self-existence. Every life is a step which he can take backward or forward; by his action, his will in life, by the thought and knowledge that governs it, he determines what he is yet to be, *yathā karma yātha śrutam*.

This conception of a spiritual evolution with a final spiritual perfection or transcendence of which human life is the means and an often repeated opportunity, is the pivot of the Indian conception of existence. It gives to our life a figure of ascent, in spirals or circles, which has to be filled in with knowledge and action and experience. There is room within it for all human aims, activities and aspirations; there is place in the ascent for all types of human character and nature. The spirit in the world assumes hundreds of forms, follows many tendencies, gives many shapes to his play or *līlā*, and all are part of the mass of necessary experience; each has its justification, its law, its reason of being, its utility. The claim of sense satisfaction is not ignored, nor the soul's need of labour and heroic action, nor the hundred forms of the pursuit of knowledge, nor the play of the emotions or the demand of the aesthetic faculties. Indian culture did not deface nor impoverish the richness of the grand frame of human life or depress or mutilate the activities of our nature. On the contrary, it gave them, subject to certain principles of harmony and government, their full, often their extreme value; it bade man fathom on his way all experience, fill in life opulently with colour and beauty and enjoyment and give to his character and action a large rein and heroic proportions. This side of the Indian idea is stamped in strong relief over the epic and the classical literature, and to have read the Ramayana, Mahabharata, the dramas, the literary epics, the romances, the lyric and the great abundance of gnomic poetry, to say nothing of the massive remains of other cultural work and

social and political system and speculation without perceiving this breadth, wealth and greatness, one must have read without eyes to see or without a mind to understand. But while the generous office of culture is to enrich, enlarge and encourage human life, it must also find in it a clue, give it a guiding law and subject it to some spiritual, moral and rational government. The greatness of the ancient Indian civilisation consists in the power with which it did this work and the high and profound wisdom and skill with which, while basing society, ordering the individual life, encouraging and guiding human nature and propensity, it turned them all towards the realisation of its master idea and never allowed the mind it was training to lose sight of the use of life as a passage to the Infinite and a discipline for spiritual perfection.

Two main truths are always kept in sight by the Indian mind whether in the government of life or in the discipline of spirituality. First, our being in its growth has stages through which it must pass. Then again, life is complex, the nature of man is complex, and in each life man has to figure a certain sum of its complexity. The initial movement of life is that form of it which develops the powers of the ego in man; *kāma*, *artha*, self-interest and desire are the original human motives. Indian culture gave a large recognition to this primary turn of our nature. These powers have to be accepted; the ego-life must be lived and the forces it evolves in the human being brought to fullness. But to get its full results and inspire it eventually to go beyond itself, it must be kept from making any too unbridled claim or heading furiously towards its satisfaction. There must be no internal or external anarchy. A life governed in any absolute or excessive degree by self-will, by passion, sense-attraction, self-interest, desire cannot be the whole natural rule of a human or a humane existence. The tempting imagination that it can, with which the western mind has played in leanings or outbursts of what has been called Paganism,—not at all justly, for the Greek or Pagan intelligence had a noble thought for self-rule, law and harmony,—is alien to the Indian mentality. It perceived very well the possibility of a materialistic life and its attraction worked on certain minds and gave birth to the Charvaka philosophy; but this could not take hold or stay. Even it allowed to it when lived on a grand scale a certain perverse greatness, but a colossal egoism was regarded as the nature of the Asura and Rakshasa, the Titanic, gigantic or demoniac type of spirit, not the proper life for man. Another power claims man, overtopping desire and self-interest and self-will, the power of the Dharma.

The Dharma, religious law of action, is not as in the Western idea, only a religious creed and cult inspiring an ethical and social rule, but the complete

rule of our life, the harmony of the whole tendency of man to find a right and just law of his living. Everything has its Dharma, its law of life imposed on it by its nature, but the Dharma for man is a conscious imposition of a rule of ideal living on all his members. This Dharma develops, evolves, has stages, gradations of spiritual and ethical ascension. All men cannot follow in all things one common and invariable rule of action. Nature, the position, the work, aim and bent, the call of life, the call of the spirit within, the degree and turn of development, the Adhikara or capacity differ too much in different men; life is too complex to admit of such an ideal simplicity. Man lives in society and by society, and every society has its own general Dharma, its law of right stability and right functioning, and into this law the individual life must be fitted; but the individual's part in society, his own nature, the needs of his capacity and temperament all vary, and the social law on its side must make room for this variety. The man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive and acquisitive man, the priest, scholar, poet, artist, ruler, fighter, trader, tiller of the soil, craftsman, labourer, servant cannot all have the same training, be shaped in the same pattern, follow the same way of living or be all put under the same tables of the law. Each has his type of nature and there must be a rule for the perfection of that type, or each his function and there must be a canon and ideal of the function. The main necessity is that, that there must be in all things some wise and understanding canon and ideal; a lawless impulse of desire and interest and propensity cannot be allowed; even in the frankest following of desire and interest and propensity there must be a rule, a guidance, an ethic and science arising from and answering to some truth of the thing sought, a restraint, an order, a standard of perfection. The rule and training and result differ with the type of the man and the type of the function. The idea of the Indian social system was a harmony of this complexity of *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma*.

At the same time there is a universal embracing Dharma, but this is a law of perfection of the human soul; it is a growth of the developing mind and spirit of man into the power and force of certain universally ideal qualities which make up in their harmony the highest type of manhood. This was the ideal of the best, the good or noble man, the self-perfecting individual, *ārya*, *śreṣṭha*, *sajjana*, *sādhu*. The ideal was, if preponderatingly, by no means purely an ethical conception, but also intellectual, social, sympathetic, religious, the flowering of the whole ideal nature of man. The most various qualities met in the best, the good and noble man. Benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, patience, kindness, long-suffering, liberality; courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence,

truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a certain strong independence and noble pride; wisdom, intelligence, love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, an openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; a strong religious sense, piety, the spiritual turn, in social relations a strict observance of all the dharma, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or caste; this is the total ideal of the Arya, the man of noble nature and upbringing, which disengages itself and indeed is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India during two millenniums. An ideal and rational, a spirit-wise and worldly-wise, a deeply religious, nobly ethical, a firmly yet flexibly intellectual, a scientific and aesthetic, a patient and tolerant, but an arduously self-disciplining culture with a strong eugenistic element was the base of Indian civilisation.

But all this was only foundation and preparation for that highest thing by whose presence human life is exalted beyond itself into something spiritual and divine. As Indian culture raised the crude human life of desire, self-interest and satisfied propensity beyond its first intention to a noble self-exceeding and shapeliness by infusing into it the order and high aims of the Dharma, so it raised the nobler life of the self-perfecting human being beyond its own intention to a mightier self-exceeding and freedom by infusing into it the great aim of liberation, *mukti*, *moksha*. The law and its observance is neither the beginning nor the end of man; for beyond the law he climbs to a great spiritual freedom. Not a noble but ever death-bound manhood, but immortality, freedom, divinity are the highest height of man's perfection. Indian culture held always this highest aim constantly before the eye and insistently inspired with its prospect and light the whole conception of existence, ennobled with its aim the whole life of the individual and cast into a scale of ascension to it the whole ordering of society. The well-governed system of the individual and communal existence, which is always in the first instance a natural functioning, a pursuit of interest, a satisfaction of desire and human need, a combination of knowledge and labour with these ends, but must be controlled and uplifted by the ideals of the Dharma, was founded on an education which, while it fitted man for his role in life, while it stamped on his mind a generous ideal of an accomplished humanity, gave him at the same time the theory of the highest liberating knowledge and familiarised him with the conditions of a spiritual existence. The symbols of his religion were filled with suggestions which led towards it; at every step he was reminded of lives behind and in

front and worlds beyond the material existence, of the Spirit who is greater than the life he informs, of the final goal, of the high immortal freedom. He was not allowed to forget that he had a highest self and that always he was living, moving and had his being in God, in the Spirit, he knew that there were systems and disciplines provided by which the great liberating truth could be realised and to which he could turn and follow them according to his Adhikara, the claim of his nature and his capacity, he saw around him and revered the practicans and the mighty masters of these disciplines. They were the teachers of youth, the summits of his society, the great lights of his culture, the inspirers and fountain-heads of his civilisation. Spiritual freedom and perfection were not figured as a high and far-off ideal, but presented as the common human necessity, a thing for all to grow into, made possible to all on the basis of life and the Dharma, and the spiritual idea governed, enlightened and gathered towards itself all the other life-motives of a great civilised community.

(To be Continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

Let *faithfulness* to the Divine be your *Tapasya*. Then there will *begin to come a realisation* of the true *supramental friendship* with the Divine.

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The *generosity* of your *absolute self-giving* will bring to you the revelation of the *generosity* of the *Divine's Love*.

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Reach through *aspiration* the *intuitive mind*; then you will know what is meant by *transformation*.

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SRI AUROBINDO: HIS TEACHING

(*Extracts from an address delivered at Surat, May 1947*)

I AM standing before you after a lapse of 23 years and, according to a well-known law of science, faculties and powers that are out of use become atrophied. So you should not be surprised if you find me incapable of giving a speech before you. The second reason for my inability to speak is a kind of conviction that has grown in me that no great or solid work can be done by speeches and lectures. It is quite different in the case of programmes of political and social reconstructions where many persons have to meet and come to an accepted solution after the pros and cons of the programme have been thrashed out in public and people are allowed to form their judgments freely. As the programme and the problem primarily concern the collectivity, it is proper that collectivity must help in the deliberations and the decisions, but with regard to matters spiritual and religious the real work is not a subject of lectures or discussions. Spirituality concerns our inner life and it must become a moulder of man's action, if it is a living and true spirituality. But as you have showered a rain of irresistible affection after the lapse of so many years I feel that I should say a few words to reciprocate your feelings.

My friend here told you just now that I am interested in arts. It is true. I am interested in arts because in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo life has a place. I am interested in arts because of my interest in life. I feel that the time has come when our people should learn to give up the false identification of spirituality with the poverty of life. To regard the one as an indispensable sign of the other is the current error of our people. Renunciation for the sake of renunciation, dryness, poverty or the tendency to get rid of things are not indispensable characteristics of spirituality. A spirituality that cannot make life full, rich, wide and noble, how is it going to reconstruct and reconstitute society or the nation? In true spiritual life external renunciation can have only a secondary place. The real renunciation is the inner renunciation of desires and the ego. Life gains its fullest sense and significance when it is surrendered to the Divine and is accepted as the field of manifesting the Divine.

You refer to my little services rendered to the public long ago, but I feel that the whole of your consideration for me is hardly due to that cause. Much of your regard and feeling is directed to the great Spiritual Light

whom it is my privilege to follow,—I mean it is directed towards the great personality of Sri Aurobindo—my Master.

Mankind at present is passing through a critical period. Every country has got scores of problems whose solution defies the powers of its best leaders. The common man seems to live surrounded by difficulties of all kinds. In India the nation is passing through many acute economic difficulties, difficulties of producing the necessities of life and the greater difficulty of distributing them. The difficulty of how and where to get rice, where to get sugar and why the cloth rationed out is so little, etc., are the unending questions which constantly occupy the mind of an ordinary man. I believe the ordinary man wants to know what Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Sri Aurobindo's yoga can do in bringing about the solution of these problems. Apart from the difficulty of establishing international peace on a solid foundation, the ordinary man is interested in knowing how far spirituality can help him in solving his many problems.

And it is not the ordinary man only who asks these questions. Men of intelligence and even leaders feel the great importance of the pressing problems of the moment. All of us believe and feel that if we can solve a particular pressing problem of the day, we would then have time enough to look to the solution of more fundamental problems of the being. The constitution of man's nature is such that we do not see the error in that line of thinking. In solving immediate problems of the present, other more complicated problems are bound to arise. Take the case of the freedom of our nation. We were all thinking that with the achievement of freedom, all the problems of our nation would be automatically solved or at least would be on their way to solution. In fact, we had thought that our national life would run fast like a motor car on a tarred road as soon as freedom would be attained. Freedom has actually come but unfortunately the road in front of our people is not at all clear. Unexpected obstacles have cropped up and new difficulties are arising everyday, and it is hard to say whether there is a road or a forest to cross.

Sri Aurobindo has striven to solve the fundamental problems of human life and it has been seen by him that it is not by seeking the solution of temporary problems but solving the fundamental problems of the being that can lead to the correct solution of man's problems. But the difficulty is that fundamental problems—problems which go to the root of the being—do not interest the majority of mankind. As to those who do not seek such a solution it is not possible to force it upon them. The solution which Sri Aurobindo indicates is a simple one in comparison with the complex results it attains, but I should make it clear that its execution is not easy.

The question is how to attain the solution of the fundamental questions of human life. We want to know how and by what means Sri Aurobindo finds out and invites us to find out their solutions. Generally man is accustomed to employ his intelligence—in short his mind—for solving all his problems. Uptil now man has employed his intellect for solving his political, social, economical and other problems. The first thing that Sri Aurobindo tells is that the intellect alone would not be able to give us final solutions of these questions. Our culture has from times immemorial accepted the principle that true knowledge is not attained by the use of the intellect, but by going beyond it—by transcending the limits of the human intellect,—

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह

Sri Aurobindo applies this great truth of our culture to all our problems. As intellect has not succeeded in giving us a radical solution of even one of our complex problems, it follows that if there is an instrument of knowledge higher than the intellect then we might be able to get some solution by awakening that new instrumentation in ourselves.

But the ordinary human being hardly asks such fundamental questions—in fact, they hardly even occur to him. Today the culture that was regarded as the most powerful in the world, I mean the Western culture, is almost on the verge of committing suicide. There has been a great land-slide in the inner and outer aspects of human psychology and even in the structure of human life itself. For the bare necessities of life, food, clothing and housing, a great portion of mankind all over the world has been suffering enormously. Even here in India a great many difficulties have cropped up. All the values of life, inner as well as outer, of religion, of society, of morality, have been completely shaken. So the mind of man today is primarily preoccupied with procuring food and other primary necessities of life, but even there he finds many difficulties and he goes on doubting whether there could really be any purpose in such a life. I have met some friends who have asked me why a world full of such difficulties and distractions should continue to exist at all. Why not, they say, destroy the world with a few atom bombs and solve the problem once for all.

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I am grateful to you for the kindness you have extended to me but as I told you already, I feel that much of your enthusiasm and faith is directed towards Sri Aurobindo, my Great Master. It shows that all

of you instinctively feel that Sri Aurobindo holds the key to the solution of all the problems of our life, that he has a power that can save us and raise. I am with you in that great faith, for I know that his divine attainment contains in it untold and unimaginable riches far exceeding any demand that one can make upon it. That Sri Aurobindo's life in India was connected with Gujarat for many years is to me a great fortune of our province, and it is not surprising that Gujarat should be better able to receive his message and understand him than other provinces. Many leaders of our province today were once students of Sri Aurobindo, when he was professor at Baroda: K. M. Munshi, C. B. Purani, C. J. Sutaria, Dadubhai are some of those who were his students. Thus Gujarat may claim him as its own, for, his stay in Gujarat was much longer than his stay in his own province of Bengal.

Today we feel that political freedom is, and should be, a very important part of our national life. I readily agree with you; but I want to draw your attention to the fact that in the comity of nations it is not freedom but cultural individuality of each nation that makes possible its characteristic contribution to human civilization. Freedom is, in fact, the condition in which each nation is able to manifest unhampered its inmost soul. It is in the condition of political freedom that national genius is able to express itself spontaneously without any obstruction. National freedom is the condition in which nations of the world can, with the greatest advantage, interchange the forms and elements of their individual cultural life to their mutual advantage. I admit that there are nations whose contribution has been great and remarkable in the field of political constitution. They have experimented with various forms of political government and have evolved systems which can be of great service to other nations.

But let us find out the special character of our own culture. What is the contribution that our nation can make to the culture of humanity? There are signs that mankind is being drawn towards a unity, and the walls of separation between nations are fast crumbling. This is a sign of progress. So some of us might feel that it is not necessary to think in terms of our national life and culture today, but let us remember that human unity is yet in the making. It is not yet an accomplished fact. Each nation has in the course of its history developed a culture of its own. Our nation also has evolved such a culture, a spiritual culture—with a distinct way of looking at life. Spirituality is the keynote of our culture and it pervades our life from the largest field to the smallest, and though it is not in its full vigour, its effect is not absent from our life. What we have to decide is whether we want to put aside this precious heritage for ever and allow it to sink into oblivion or whether it is worthwhile to have a look at it, to preserve

what is precious in it and to rebuild on it a greater and more synthetic culture.

There are people who consider themselves modernists—some who call themselves even ultra-modern,—there are besides many “isms” abroad. But one thing can be said in spite of all modernisms that the very constitution of human nature is such that the fundamental questions of being will always rise in some form or other, at some time or other, and that it would not be possible to shut the human mind to them. It is at that time that we would find spirituality useful. Some people believe that the spirituality of India is a matter of the past, but fortunately that belief is not borne out by facts. Right from the times of the Vedas passing through the periods of the Upanishads, the Gita, the Puranas and the Middle Ages, there has been a long and unbroken line of seekers, saints, and sadhakas,—many spiritual personalities—that have kept burning the flame. So our spirituality is not something strange and miraculous, an interesting but dead specimen to be put in a museum. Even today there are quite a good number of Yogis in India.

It is necessary for me to give a word of caution here. There is a class of people who accept that spirituality is our special characteristic. But they also maintain that whatever was possible to be done in that field has already been done. The ancient Rishis have done everything and there remains nothing that we have to do. There is some truth in it, but a lot of untruth also. Spirituality is founded on knowledge. Knowledge is not rational equipment or accumulation of information. Real knowledge is knowledge by identity. Knowledge means the identity of consciousness with the object of knowledge—in the highest sense—with the ultimate Reality. From this point of view, to attain higher and higher conditions of consciousness, to establish unity with them, is also a sign of knowledge. Thus when we look at the evolution of true knowledge, the Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita give us a solid foundation of our spiritual culture, but we know that we cannot remain always on the foundations. We have to build upon these foundations and bring into being a solid, great and beautiful structure.

We have got a solid foundation of spiritual knowledge and our people got the assurance of the living power of our culture when Ramkrishna Paramahansa was born towards the middle of the last century. It was then our people saw that an unlettered villager with his spiritual attainment can be far superior to those who have mere intellectual training.

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When I was asked by some of our friends to speak about Sri Aurobindo, the modern spiritual leader, I was in a great fix. It is not easy to put the many-sided rays of the sun adequately before you. The task is as difficult as that of a man who is brought face to face with the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas and is asked to describe it. There in the unfathomable peace rises Kailas, the abode of the Great Shiva, which defies description. But there is so much else there also which is indescribable. There is, for instance, the ineffable beauty of the constant play of colours produced by the brilliant rays of the sun pouring upon the fields of snow, a constantly changing world of colour more magical than the play of the colours of the rainbow. There is besides a tremendous and irresistible power there on those heights, there are unfathomable valleys of snow and wide range of mountain tops covered with snow. There we see the origin of many rivers, rare medicinal plants, thick forests rising tier upon tier, holy streams and crystal-clear lakes,—so much is there that it defies description.

How could I speak to you, even if I were to make the effort, about his great contribution to human knowledge? It would take years if I were to speak about the new interpretation of the Vedas which he has given. The Vedas appear in quite a different light when seen through his interpretation. The commentaries of the Upanishads which he has given would require longer time than a single lecture. He has written a series of Essays on the Gita which is unique and unsurpassed. His "A Defence of Indian Culture" is a series of brilliant and profound essays containing the principles and foundations of Indian culture where the systems of Indian polity, society, religion and arts stand clearly revealed in their true character to our minds. He has given us a unique view-point of poetic criticism in a series of essays entitled "The Future Poetry", which throws quite a new light on the field of literary criticism. "The Synthesis of Yoga" is his well-known work almost on a par with his great masterpiece "The Life Divine," containing the integration of various psychological systems of inner discipline. Each field that he has touched he has enriched by his unique contribution. He has arrived at a grand synthesis of human culture which promises to become the leading note of coming generations. He clearly envisaged the lines of social evolution in his book "Psychology of Social Development" and he envisaged the unity of mankind in "The Ideal of Human Unity." To each field of life he has contributed thought-provoking and epoch-making works. It is not easy to master this vast literature and I do not feel equal to the task of giving you a complete picture of such a versatile personality and genius in the course of a single lecture. I should be very happy indeed if I could convey to you one ray of his multiple and many-sided light.

Yet I also know that you will all be disappointed if I do not tell you anything about Sri Aurobindo after such a long stay at Pondicherry. I will just try to give you an outline of his vision; but before we begin we have to take a certain standpoint. Today we depend upon the intellect for the solution of the many problems which have afflicted mankind. There are many intellectual leaders of mankind like George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russel and Einstein. They have a keen, comprehensive and subtle intellect and it has power to apply itself to the solution of all the human problems of life, and yet, either as an instrument of knowledge or as an instrument that solves the many problems of life, it must be granted that Plato, Socrates and Aristotle have not been surpassed by the intellectual leaders of today. So during nearly 2500 years man's intellect has not been able to show a remarkable progress or development. It is certainly true that the mind of man has worked differently in the different fields of human life, but no permanent results have been achieved. The greatest contribution of the human intellect to the culture and progress of man is that it has given him a very great control over his surroundings and over nature. But when he tries to solve the more fundamental, difficult and complicated problems of life, then the human mind creates new ones while it tries to solve one. Machinery has come and seems to solve the problem of production but it has also brought into being the problem of capital and labour and many others. Man has created political and social institutions none of which is able to satisfy him, for none is perfect. Today democracy is in vogue and some people think it to be a perfect and ideal form of constitution and yet wherever there is democracy we do not find the Golden Age. The reason is that the intellect of man which has found out these solutions is itself imperfect. An imperfect instrument cannot produce perfect results. Even the still small voice rising in the conscience is not always an infallible guide.

The question then will arise as to how to attain the truth. It has been accepted in our culture for thousands of years that the home of Truth is beyond the senses and the mind or intellect. It is on a level of consciousness which is beyond mind. The whole vision of Sri Aurobindo is based upon the experience of this spiritual status beyond mind. Truth dwells uncovered above the level of the intellect.

But there are people who consider agnosticism and the questioning attitude as the highest condition of man. They would say, "All the story about the truth beyond the intellect is moonshine. It is difficult to say whether there can be truth beyond the mind." Our difficulty here becomes twofold. On one side is this doubting human intellect and on the other there are some spiritualists who maintain that the state of consciousness beyond mind or

intellect is the highest goal of human life and once the human consciousness rises beyond the mind, it does not come back. Both these are partial and one-sided, and therefore at their best are only half-truths. The fear or the belief that supra-physical or supra-intellectual reality is only an illusion is not true—and may itself be a superstition of the mind—because from the very beginning of human history there have always been witnesses to the experience of the Reality and even today though people with spiritual experience are rare, still fortunately they are not altogether absent. One can accept that the path of spirituality is not easy, but that does not mean that it is illusory or impossible. Many things are difficult in the beginning but afterwards become easy by practice. On the other hand, the assertion that man does not return after attaining the state of higher consciousness is not altogether true. The ideal of withdrawing away from life into the supreme Reality seems to have got currency in our country after the 9th century and is seen steadily growing upto the 16th or 17th century. But even during the same period we had the Vaishnava religion, the Tantras and Kashmir school of Shaivism, all of which accept life as a term of manifestation of the spirit. They believe that the higher Divine Perfection, the Supreme Truth that is beyond mind, should manifest itself here on this earth.

Some people will ask you that the Truth above mind, the Reality that is all knowledge, all consciousness, and self-existent delight is so different from the ignorant, suffering, blind and mortal humanity that there seems little chance of any meeting or harmony between the two. It is Sri Aurobindo's vision that teaches us that the belief about their incompatibility and disharmony is not true. If perfection and divinity and the life on the earth are far from each other, if they are contrary to each other, then it becomes all the more our duty to bring them into a harmony, to make life fit for the Divinity and to make it divine. Sri Aurobindo calls us to attain the Divinity, to transform the nature and make life divine. It is not an inevitable consequence that those who ascend to the Reality beyond mind would not return or cannot return to life. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the highest fulfilment of attaining the instrument of knowledge above intellect is not in remaining on the levels of consciousness beyond mind but in bringing about a descent of that consciousness on this earth. The belief that Divinity is always and forever away from the earth-consciousness, though current, is not true; and looking to the fact that such efforts had been made in our country in the past, Sri Aurobindo's affirmation that our earth is a place for manifesting Divinity is quite justified.

Perhaps an illustration from Puranic story will make Sri Aurobindo's philosophy easily comprehensible. In fact the Puranic story goes back

right to the Vedas. The Rig veda speaks of three great strides of Vishnu and the Puranas have developed this story in their characteristic manner by supplying the circumstances and the details of sacrifice performed by king Bali where the Great Vishnu pervaded three worlds in three immense steps. Applied to Sri Aurobindo's vision these three steps of the Divine Vishnu can correspond to the three distinct steps observable in the process of universal evolution from the Inconscient towards the Supreme Superconscient. The first step from the Inconscient—the region spoken of in the Vedas as “darkness covered by intenser darkness,” *tamāsittamasā gūḍham*,—is the evolution of Matter, the all pervading substratum present to the physical senses. Our earth and other systems of infinite worlds, solar systems and the regions covered by the nebula, and beyond them constitute this first step. The second is the evolution of life. This step begins with the vegetable kingdom and the smallest and the invisible germs and extends to the whole rich field of life with its graded beings, immense activities and infinite play of life-force, with a gradual addition to the instruments of knowledge. That was the second step of the evolving Force. The third step is the evolution of Mind—the mental consciousness with its mental capacities using the data of the senses it reacts to the physical objects directly with its instrument of knowledge, which are far subtler and more effective than those of the vital being. Looking at the great ocean of matter surrounding us we find its infinite material energy, and it is remarkable that each atom of this infinite matter holds infinite potential energy. In the next step we find, first, that there is a fundamental difference between matter and life. Matter increases by addition, life grows and goes on developing and increases by absorbing matter and other forms of life. As an atom of matter holds infinite material potential energy, so does a cell of life or a unit of life hold in its self unlimited life-force. The tiny seed of the Banian tree holds within itself infinite power of becoming, innumerable trees. As evolution progresses from matter to life, instruments of knowledge and feeling and perception go on increasing and developing. The vegetable shows the presence of a kind of nervous system which reacts to the outside contact and we see that as life goes on developing, this nervous system also goes on developing and becoming more and more complex and effective. In the animals free locomotion, instinct, sensitiveness to outer contacts, some primitive formation of knowledge based on sense-data, reproduction of the species, power of assimilation, and other faculties are seen to come to the surface. Then when the mind came to the front as a distinct power of consciousness, the elements of intelligence become the principal power. It was then that questions of fundamental character began to be asked;

"Who am I", "What is this world?", were the questions which the mind alone is capable of formulating and the mental consciousness has also the capacity to answer these questions partially.

But to conclude from this that as man has got mental faculties he is at present a purely mental being would not be quite correct, because though man has the capacity of developing a pure mind, hardly one in a thousand is seen doing it. We have to confess that man at present is not entirely an intellectual being. He is more or less living in the animal consciousness, i.e. in his vital sheath. Even if he seems to use the intelligence he is doing it to satisfy his vital cravings, his desires and his ambitions. It is a rare soul who asks questions affecting the fundamentals of being, "what is life", "what is the world", "what is Nature", or "what is the ultimate Reality if there is any". These are questions which trouble very few in mankind.

The general idea is that mind is the highest and last term of evolution, there is or need be nothing beyond. But if you look at human evolution you will see that this intellectual or mental faculty is able to give man some guidance towards the solution of his problems of life but all its solutions are pragmatic, temporary, limited. It is not in the structure of the mental consciousness to give ultimate and true solutions of these problems. Thus the intellect of man is not able to lead him to a sense of finality and certitude with regard to man's fundamental questions. But it would not be correct to conclude from this that in order to reach the Reality one has to plunge into mystic unknowable depths and the intellect is to be set aside or rather to be thrown into a state of coma. It is possible to get an indication of the Reality which is beyond mind even by a process of mental reasoning. If we turn our eyes to the important fields of cultural activities of the human spirit, we find there some indication of an action of a power higher than the intellect. In religion, in art, in poetry and such other creative fields of activity we see that the highest results are not attained by mere intellectual power, but by the use of some other greater faculty. That faculty is ordinarily called "intuition", sometimes it is "inspiration" and less frequently "revelation". Even in the fields of action it is seen that the most crucial action is sometimes a result not of an intellectual reasoning, but of a clear inspiration or intuition. This faculty beyond the intellect bursts upon the ordinary consciousness of man like a visitation from an alien world, but humanity has not been altogether a stranger to its action. The effort now necessary is to make its intermittent and unconscious activity conscious, permanent and continued. The most important part of Sri Aurobindo's mission is to raise the human consciousness from mind

to this higher and more effective consciousness and instrument, and to bring about and establish in man this new consciousness. He is the first Seer who has visualised clearly the whole process of this ascent and its subsequent descent and transformation. But it is not a personal attainment limited to an individual, it is a new way opened out to the whole of humanity—at least for that part of humanity which feels called upon to take up the adventure by fulfilling the conditions.

This higher instrument of consciousness is called Supermind by Sri Aurobindo. The question that arises is what one should do to attain it. Some are confused and ask whether the supramental level of consciousness and the Divine Power are one and the same or are they different. It might be answered that the Supermind is the level of consciousness which mind has to attain in its further progress towards the Reality. As Sri Aurobindo is giving his vision to the modern mind, he has given it a distinct name so that it may be easily understood and is perhaps more fitting too. Those who think that the whole humanity will attain that higher state of consciousness all at once are not right, for, all men have not got the aspiration for that Reality. It should also be understood that the attainment of the higher consciousness is not very easy. In fact, all real upward movements are hardly easy or simple. There are powers of the Ignorance that oppose the progress of man and it is by overcoming that opposition that man attains progress. To the question how to attain a higher state of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo has given the reply by stating that it is as a result of constant unswerving aspiration that a man is able to attain it.

All men have in them the unmanifested Divinity—this is what Sri Aurobindo says and at first sight it might appear to be a statement concerning some idéal condition without reference to man's present status. Many might even hesitate to accept it as a practical truth to be pursued as a serious object of one's life. But in our culture especially, and generally in all religions, it is clearly accepted that the Divine is present in the hearts of all creatures, *iṣvara sarva bhutānām hṛddeṣe tiṣṭhati*; but because each one has the Divine in his heart it does not follow every man as he is is Divine. It only means that each one has to awaken the Divinity within him and make it dynamic. How to do that is a practical question that requires an answer. One of the methods out of the many that can be adopted is to do all actions, physical as well as subtle, as an offering to the Divine. We should not be surprised if we find that our ordinary consciousness moved by desires, impulses and selfishness, by the lower movements of our being is unable to carry out complete surrender of the being. Inertia and past impressions also obstruct the process of

self-surrender, but, in spite of all that, even if the process of self-surrender is successful to a limited extent, even then one should not become disheartened but should continue the process. Whatever the form of action, small or great, it should be done for the sake of the Divine and surrendered to Him. This process of self-surrender is only the beginning of Sadhana and gradually the presence of the Divine will awaken in the heart and the experience of the same Divine Presence in all will also follow. How true self-surrender and devotion to the Divine are rewarded by the realisation of the Divine Presence is best illustrated by Sri Aurobindo's spiritual experience in his jail life. I will end my speech with the words of Sri Aurobindo which describe that experience in very simple words:

“I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do, they can do nothing but help in My purpose. They also are doing My work; they are not My enemies but My instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment.”¹

BY A. B. PURANI

¹ *Uttarpara Speech*

THE MUSE OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE INFINITE ALL—THE COMPOSER AND AUDIENCE

THE real-idea of God's poetic mind does not remain unmanifested in His superconscient sleep but is shaped out into a wondrous world of perfect living forms. As the Mother says, "The will of the Divine is to manifest, not to remain altogether withdrawn in inactivity and in absolute silence; if the Divine Consciousness were really an inaction of un-manifesting bliss, there would never have been any creation."¹ By His creative power He lends a substance to the thought that 'was sown in the unseen void'. He is not only the seer but also the architect executing the design of His thought into 'Reality's summer-house'.

An architect hewing out self's living rock,
Phenomenon built Reality's summer-house
On the beaches of the sea of Infinity.²

He has not only the blazing eye of wisdom, the flame-covered eye of Maheshwari but also the sculptor's skill of building in His mood of frenzy beautiful symbols of His poetic idea in the consummate craftsmanship of Mahasaraswati, 'Fashioner of perfection' who is satisfied with nothing short of a perfect perfection, 'The careful and efficient builder' with an 'unfailing exactitude of result and fulfilment'.

He is the supreme poet 'singing his song unbidden', out of the delight of existence, and the world which is a formulation of his divine consciousness is a great living poem composed of His words which are fire-blades, 'the myriad virgin thoughts', the truth-seeds that have flowered out of the one supreme word, the 'word concealed in the upper fire', the one word of the Kena Upanishad with which He creates the worlds and heavens above.

An artist teeming with her world-idea,
She never could exhaust its memberless thoughts,
Untired of sameness and untired of change,
Endlessly she unrolled her moving act,

¹ "Words of the Mother," p. 197

² "Savitri," Book III Canto III

A mystery drama of divine delight,
 A living poem of world ecstasy,
 A kakemono of significant forms,
 A coiled perspective of developing scenes,...¹

What is true of God is also true of the poet. He is not only the seer but also the artisan of perfect forms. The hidden word, the infinite consciousness in him formulates itself into beautiful ideas which slowly unfold themselves into perfect speech. This analogy of poetical creation to divine creation is also figured by other poets, as for example by Coleridge who sees an actual relation between the two. He thus writes in 'Biographia Literaria' (Ch. XIII) that the poet's work is "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite *I am*." The poet is a creator in the sense in which God the Father gave birth to the universe. The same image is used by Shelley who says of the poet,

But from these create he can
 Forms more real than living man,
 Nurslings of immortality.²

But such a perfect expression of the real-idea is possible only when the poet is possessed by the all-beautiful Infinite, the Master musician who manifests his muse of the silence through an instrument fit for the reception of His idea. Thus the poet prays to the Supermind, 'the Muse of the silence', to carve his 'epic mountain-lined' 'in the uncertain glow of the human mind.'

Just as love, joy, power and knowledge are not personal things but waves from an everlasting sea, similarly poetry is not an individual creation but an outflow from a universal world of harmony. It is not the poet creating perfect forms of beauty but the spirit of beauty itself possessing the poet and seeking its expression upon earth through him. A similar phenomenon is noticeable in the realm of history. The great epoch-making events of history are not the personal deeds of individual men but are the manifestations of the Mother, the Divine Spirit which chooses the suitable instruments for fulfilling itself in Time. Sri Aurobindo thus writes, "She moves in Time and the very movement fulfils itself, creates its means, accomplishes its ends. It is not an accident that she works

¹ "Savitri," Book III Canto III

² "Prometheus Unbound",—Act I Scene I

in one man more than in another. He is chosen because he is a likely vessel, and having chosen him she neither rejects him till the purpose is fulfilled nor allows him to reject her."¹ Being not only force but also consciousness she knows what instruments have affinity with her purpose and are the fit channels for its fulfilment, those which can respond rightly to her own rhythm. The moment they cease to be in tune with it and are not able to keep pace with her progressive rhythm, they are discarded into the dead limbo of time and she adopts new instruments. This explains the birth of new revolutions and great personalities in every age, each person embodying in himself a particular aspect of the manifold truth. What is true in the shaping of history holds good also in the sphere of poetic creation. Each age gives birth to a type of poetry which breaks new ground, the personality of the individual poet of a particular age is the prism through which the light of beauty and truth is refracted on the screen of time. In our own age Sri Aurobindo is such a priest of the new muse, who is chosen by the Divine as a fit and powerful instrument for the expression of His unfolding beauty in the movement of Time. He is so divinely possessed with her that his entire being pulsates with the breath of divine Beauty which she is unveiling in her evolutionary march. His poetry, therefore, has the same attributes as are associated with the divine creation.

THE SUBJECTIVE PROCESS OF CREATION

A poem is a boundless expansion of the poet's consciousness. It is a becoming of his being. As the being is not separate from his becoming but present in it, constituting it and inherent in its every infinitesimal atom, similarly the poet's own soul cannot be separate from his creation. His creation is only an unfolding of what was in him. The distinction between subjective and objective poetry thus becomes unsound. Becoming can only know itself wholly when it knows itself as Being. Similarly a poem can be known fully only when it is studied as a revelation of the poet's soul and not as an independent objective truth apart from the poet. Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry is thus intimately related with his philosophy. According to him the human mind, so also the poet's, contains all things in an infinite subjective grasp. His self-consciousness is spaceless. It does not distribute itself through all in an infinite objective self-extension. Time and space are that one conscious being viewing itself in extension, subjectively as time and objectively as space.

¹ "The Ideal of the Karmayogin," p. 114

Similarly a poet creates beauty out of himself. He has an inner vision of truth. The objects of the universe serve only to kindle the flame which is already in him. Since the self of the poet is the same as the self of the existence outside, the friction of his living being with the external objects awakens the secret truth and thus brings to the surface what was pre-existent in him. It at once leaps up from within as a thing remembered suddenly in the surface consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo writes, "Just as a certain objectivity is necessary to make poetry live and the thing seen stand out before our eyes, so on the other hand even the most objective presentation starts from an inner view and subjective process of creation, for the poet really creates out of himself and none out of what he sees outwardly; that outward seeing only serves to excite the inner vision to its work. Otherwise his work would be a mechanical construction and putting together, not a living creation."¹

What is required of the poet is a faithfulness to his inner vision, a true representation of it in external figures and symbols, and if such an expression requires a modification of external nature and passes beyond the natural form of reality, it is perfectly permissible, as the aim of art is a faithful representation of the inner truth of the spirit and not of the physical nature. The abnormal features of statues in Indian sculpture such as the four, six, eight or ten arms of Shiva, the eighteen arms of Durga should not be revolting to the aesthetic taste of the western realist as they are a real embodiment of the psychic vision. In Puranas also which are essentially an art of aesthetic presentation of truth the symbols which to the outward eye seem to be a monstrosity, an outrage to all sense of realism are in reality the faithful representations of the inner vision of the poets. "The Puranic religion worshipped the psychical forms of the Godhead within us and had to express it outwardly in symbolic figures and house it in temples that were an architectural sign of cosmic significances. And the very inwardness it intended necessitated a profusion of outward symbol to embody the complexity of these inward things to the physical imagination and vision."² "The so-called fantastic geography, as we are expressly told in the Puranas themselves, are a rich poetic figure, a symbolic geography of the inner psychical universe."³

The creation proceeds from self-vision and the psychic vision may take any outward physical form which is the proper body for that inner truth. It is not tied down to the external nature as meets the common eye. This

¹ "The Future Poetry" (Poetic Vision and Mantra)

² A Defence of Indian Culture, chapter 19

³ *ibid.*, chapter, 15

process of creation is a characteristic of all Indian art, as the poet observes: "All Indian art is a throwing out of a certain profound self-vision formed by a going within to find out the secret significance of form and appearance, a discovery of the subject in one's deeper self, the giving of soul-form to that vision and a remoulding of the material and natural shape to express the psychic truth of it with the greatest possible purity and power of outline and the greatest possible concentrated rhythmic unity of significance in all the parts of an indivisible artistic whole."¹

ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF IMITATION

The artist works from a spiritual vision within and not from external nature. Such a conception of art sets at naught Aristotle's celebrated dictum on poetry that, "Epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambics, as also, for the most part, the music of the flute and of the lyre—all these are, in the most general view of them, imitations differing, however, from each other, in three respects, according to the different means, the different objects, or the different manner of their imitation." For here the stress is on fidelity to the truth of the spirit and giving a proper form to it and not on the imitation of nature. Sri Aurobindo observes, "Art after all is not forbidden to deal with the unusual or to alter and overpass Nature, and it might almost be said that it has been doing little else since it began to serve the human imagination from its first grand epic exaggerations to the violences of modern romanticism and realism, from the high ages of Valmiki and Homer to the day of Hugo and Ibsen."²

What is sought to be achieved in art is not a reproduction of physical fact but a representation of a spiritual and a psychic truth discovered in one's deeper self through the outward forms. It is a truth not as caught by the physical senses but as seized by the soul. Speaking of the greatness of Eastern Thought and Eastern Art the Master writes, "Not to imitate Nature but to reveal that which she has hidden, to find significant forms which shall embody for us what her too obvious and familiar symbols conceal, has been the aim of the greatest Art, the Art of prehistoric antiquity and of those countries and ages whose culture has been faithful to the original truth of the spirit."³ It does not imply, however, a glorification of idealistic art, for the attempt to improve the external world by an

¹ "A Defence of Indian Culture", chapter 14

² "Views and Reviews", p. 40

idealisation of nature is as much a distortion of the inner truth as photographic representation of the outward existence, as in either case the eye is not on the inner truth but on the outward facts. In 'The Future Poetry' (Style and Substance) we read: "The aim of poetry, as of all true art, is neither a photographic or otherwise realistic imitation of Nature, nor a romantic furbishing and painting or idealistic improvement of her image, but an interpretation by the image she herself affords us not on one, but on many planes of her creation, of that which she conceals from us, but is ready, when rightly approached to reveal." The attempt of realistic art to give us a scientifically accurate presentation of life must necessarily be impossible and carry in it an artificiality as, unlike science, art cannot give the whole of the life as it actually is but must make a selection of motives and hues with the result that the work produced will be false and distorted. There is moreover the danger of the part being treated as the whole. "Scientific in its inspiration, it (Realism) subjects man's life and psychology to the scalpel and the microscope, exaggerates all that strikes the first outward view of him, his littlenesses, imperfections, uglinesses, morbidities, and comes easily to regard these things as the whole or the greater part of him and to treat life as if it were a psychological disease, a fungoid growth upon material Nature; it ends, indeed almost begins, by an exaggeration and over-stressing which betrays its true character, the posthumous child of romanticism perverted by a pseudo-scientific preoccupation."¹

The demand for an exact presentation of life in poetry is based on a very narrow conception of real life. Reality cannot be limited to the out-sides and surface faces of life. It extends deeper to the inner realms of being and as such the poet's greatest work is to give us a vision of these new realms even when he is dealing with actual things. The obsession of the modern writers with the current problems of the day may, therefore, prove to be fatal to their creative greatness unless they go beyond the things of the surface and moment and bring out their suggestion of great and deep things of eternal interest. Moreover, poetry being the creation of the beautiful, photographic presentation of the crude actuality of life cannot give rise to a beautiful creation. "All the highest activities of the mind of man deal with things other than the crude actuality or the direct appearance or the first rough appeal of existence. It is no real portion of the function of art to cut out palpitating pieces from life and present them raw and smoking or well-cooked for the aesthetic digestion. For, in the first place,

¹ "The Future Poetry" (The Movement of Modern Literature)

all art has to give us beauty and the crude actuality of life is not often beautiful.”¹

THE POET AS SEER

The function of a poet is not to reproduce nature but to give a vision of its truth. The truth which we demand from poetry is not the outward truth or the actual facts of external life but the inner truth as seen by the soul. The poet in other words is a seer. “Art is not an imitation or reproduction of outward Nature, but rather missioned to give by the aid of a transmuting faculty something more inwardly true than the external life and appearance.”¹ What distinguishes a poet from a philosopher and a scientist is his characteristic power of vision. The ancients also held the Kavi to be the seer and revealer of truth. It is not the physical sight of things but an intuitive vision of nature and man, the sight of poetic truth by the inner senses or the faculty of truth vision possessed by the true conscious soul which is the essential poetic gift, the native power of poetry. This inner sight must be intense in the seer poet to give us a great and revealing vision of God or man or nature. “The archetypal poet in a world of original ideas is, we may say, a Soul that sees in itself intimately this world and all the others and God and Nature and the life of beings and sets flowing from its centre a surge of creative rhythm and word images which become the expressive body of the vision, and the great poets are those who repeat in some measure the ideal creation, *kavayaḥ satyaśrutah*, seers and hearers of the poetic truth and the poetic word.”²

This does not mean that a poet is required to give an intellectual philosophy of life, as in these days of great doubt about the ultimate values of life we are inclined to ask of him a message to our perplexed intellects, a solution of the problems of the age, for poetic truth is different from the philosophic truth. The one is a spiritual seeing whereas the other is a philosophic thinking, an exercise of discriminative thought. Sri Aurobindo strongly criticises Arnold’s definition of poetry which lays upon the poet the function of an observer and critic of life. He thus observes that there could be no more perilous definition than Arnold’s poetic “criticism of life”, in spite of the saving epithet (“under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.”)

¹ “The Future Poetry” (The Breath of Greater Life)

² “The Future Poetry,” (The Sun of Poetic Truth)

³ “The Future Poetry” (Poetic Vision and Mantra)

A poet may make his philosophic idea of life the substance of his poetry but in order to become poetry it must be transmuted into vision. The thought must rise out of his inner self as an intuitive seeing by his soul and not as an intellectual presentation. "The Poetic vision of life is not a critical or intellectual or philosophic view of it, but a soul view, a seizing by the sense, and mantra is not in its substance or form poetic enunciation of philosophic truth, but the rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul's sight of God and nature and the world and the inner truth occult to the outward eye—of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being."¹ In actual practice there is always the danger of the intellectual element becoming predominant which causes a failure of the vision. In all dealing with such philosophy, the thinking does not strike us as an expression of intuitive vision which comes by entering into the thing itself, by identity but as intellectual. For this reason the philosophy of a poet, the impulse to teach has always proved to be the stumbling-block of the greatest poets. As Sri Aurobindo points out, it is India alone which has managed once or twice to turn philosophic poetry into a success. He gives the example of the Upanishads and the Gita. With the exception of the two or three closing chapters where it deviates into philosophical definition and metaphysical subtleties, Gita throughout maintains a poetic manner of speech. "The Upanishads too, and much more, are not at all philosophic thinking, but spiritual seeing, a rush of spiritual intuitions, throwing themselves as inevitably into the language of poetry, shaped out of fire and life, because that is their natural speech and a more intellectual utterance would have falsified their vision."² The Upanishads could never have exercised so powerful an influence upon the race for so many generations if they had been mere philosophical speculations or a metaphysical analysis of the intellectual kind. They have an undying authenticity because their authors were seers who saw the face of Truth with the eye of the Infinite rather than merely thought it with their intellect. By the supreme faculty of this poetic vision they were able to fuse philosophy and religion and poetry into one indissoluble whole. "This religion does not end with a cult or is limited to a religio-ethical aspiration, but rises to an infinite discovery of God, of self, of our highest and whole reality of spirit and being and speaks out of an ecstasy of luminous knowledge and an ecstasy of moved and fulfilled experience, this philosophy is not an abstract speculation about

¹ "The Future Poetry"—Poetic Vision and Mantra

² "A Defence of Indian Culture"

truth or a structure of the logical intelligence, but truth seen, felt, lived, held by the inmost mind and soul in the joy of utterance of an assured discovery and possession, and this poetry is the work of the aesthetic mind lifted up beyond its ordinary field to express the wonder and beauty of the rarest spiritual self-vision and the profoundest illumined truth of self and God and universe."¹

THE POET'S RIGHT TO PHILOSOPHISE

The great difficulty of transmuting philosophic attempt into a poetic success has led some critics to impose a ban on philosophy and shut it out completely from the beautiful shrine of the goddess of poetry. They have challenged the very right of a poet to philosophise at all. But to this objection also the Master has a sharp answer. As against the insistence of romanticists on emotionalism and their objection to philosophical reflection in poetry who define poetry only in terms of emotion as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' or 'emotion recollected in tranquillity', Sri Aurobindo not only holds philosophy to be consistent with poetry as an admissible material for it but also shows its universal sweep on the imagination of all the great poets. In one of his letters he writes, "It is obviously easier to be poetic when writing about a skylark than when writing about the attribute of the Brahman! But that does not mean that there is to be no thought or no expression of truth in poetry; there is no great poet who has not tried to philosophise. Shelley wrote about the skylark but he also wrote about the Brahman. 'Life like a dome of many-coloured glass stains the white radiance of eternity' is as good poetry as 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit!' And there are flights of unsurpassable poetry in the Gita and the Upanishads. And if one were to take stock in your friend's theories (that no poem should ever have any philosophy etc.) then half the world's poetry would have to disappear. Truth and thought and light cast into forms of beauty cannot be banished in that cavalier way. Music and art and poetry have striven from the beginning to express the vision of the deepest and greatest things and not the things of the surface only, and it will be so long as there are poetry and art and music." This truth is similar to what Coleridge wrote in *Biographia Literaria*, "No man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and the fragrantcy of all human Knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions,

¹ "A Defence of Indian Culture"

language." He further points out that all the greater romantic poets thought abundantly. "It may be noted that the greater romantic poets did not shun thought; they thought abundantly, almost endlessly. They have their characteristic view of life, something that one might call their philosophy, their world-view and they express it. Keats was the most romantic of poets, but he could write 'To philosophise I dare not yet;' he did not write 'I am too much of a poet to philosophise.' To philosophise he regarded evidently as mounting on the admiral's flag-ship and flying an almost royal banner."¹

This does not imply that thought and philosophic utterance are in themselves necessary to produce great poetry. Poetic creation is the offspring of one's soul, a heightening of the consciousness and does not depend upon any extraneous factors. The greater the fermentation of the soul, what Aristotle termed the Katharsis, the higher will be the quality of the poetry. But as such a state of heightened consciousness under which poetry is written is possible only by a spiritual contact with the existence outside, by entering into the very self of the objects, by contemplation upon the spirit of things and not by their surface view, for it is by the friction of the poet's self with the self of the universe that his soul leaps up like a blazing flame and he becomes aware of a new beauty of truth, therefore great thought becomes often necessary for great poetry. This view is very happily expressed by James H. Cousins: "The appearance of thought and philosophical utterance in verse does not of course necessarily raise the verse to the level of poetry. It may rise no higher than the level of the late Mr. Martin Tupper or Mrs. Wilcox. On the other hand it is impossible for great poetry to escape thought and philosophical utterance, not because these things are in themselves poetical, but because greatness in poetry can only spring from greatness of consciousness and greatness of consciousness inevitably embraces the contemplation of the fundamental relationships of humanity with itself and the universe and expresses them."² The problem of thought in poetry leads us to a wider question of poetical subjects. Are all subjects fit for poetic treatment? Here also the one guiding principle is no other than the poet's consciousness. No subject can in itself be treated as poetic or unpoetic for, as stated above, like God, the poet's creation is out of himself and does not depend upon any external form. But as certain subjects are more likely to kindle the flame of his consciousness than others, they lend themselves more easily to poetic treatment than others. As

¹ "Mystic Poetry" *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, 1946

² *New Ways in English Literature*

Sri Aurobindo says, one can't write mathematics in verse. "You can't start off

Ah, two by three plus four plus seven.
To add things is to be in heaven.

But all the same, if one thinks it worth to take the trouble, one can express the mathematician's delight in discovery or the grammarian's in grammaticising or the engineer's in planning a bridge or a house. What about Browning's *Grammarians' Funeral*? The reason why these subjects do not easily get into poetry is that they do not lend themselves to poetic handling, their substance being intellectual and abstract and their language also,—not as the substance and language of poetry must be, emotional and intuitive. Spiritual subjects on the other hand lend themselves to poetic handling because they can be expressed in the language of high emotion and radiant intuition."¹

But while giving philosophy a leading place in poetry the master artist does not forget to lay stress at the same time on the intuitive manner of vision in which the philosophic view is to be expressed. To have mere intellectual notions and beliefs about the deeper problems of life and God and nature does not make a person a mystic, a seer-poet any more than to have a belief about the existence of a flower makes one a nature poet. Thus Hegel, Plato, Spinoza cannot be called mystic seers but philosophers. A mystic must have a direct vision of the truth, a living real experience which pours itself into images. "Some romanticists seem to believe that the poet has no right to think at all, only to see and feel. I hold that philosophy has its place and can even take a leading place along with psychological experience as it does in the Gita. All depends on how it is done, whether it is a dry or a living philosophy, an arid intellectual statement or the expression not only of the living truth of thought but of something of its beauty, its light or its power."² Sri Aurobindo's poems have also to be studied in that light. They are not professions of philosophical truths but expressions of his visions, objective figures or experiences of some kind in the spiritual path. It was a wrong approach to his poetry which once resulted in the remark made by Rabindra Nath Tagore regarding his poetry and in particular his poem 'The Life Heavens' that it was not poetry proper. But as is pointed out by the seer poet, if spiritual subjects are not proper for poetic treatment

¹ A Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy

² "Mystic Poetry" *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, 1946

then much of Tagore's own poetry would be improper and almost all the poetry of Donne, Vaughan, Crashaw, Francis Thompson, A.E. and many others will have to be excluded from the domain of poetry proper. Regarding his poem 'Life Heavens' he says "Here it is the vision of the life heavens, its limitation and the counter-claim of the Earth or rather the spirit or power behind the earth consciousness. It has to be taken at that, as an expression of a certain aspect of things, an expression of a certain kind of experience, not a mental dogma. There is a deep truth behind it though it may not be the whole truth of the matter."

POETIC DELIGHT

The mere light of truth alone does not constitute poetry. God did not create the poem of the universe simply because he was in possession of the truth of His being. It was delight of existence, the joy in the expression of that truth consciousness which gave birth to the vast creation. This divine Ananda was originally the creator of the universe, that made existence. The divine is not only *chit* or consciousness but also Ananda. The poet also shares this divine self-expressive rapture, the deeper joy in the vision of the soul. "For the poet the moon of beauty and delight is a greater godhead even than the sun of truth or the breath of life, as in the symbolic image of the Vedic moon-god Soma, whose plant of intoxication has to be gathered on lonely mountain height in the moonlight and whose purified juice and essence is the sacred wine and nectar of sweetness, *rasa*, *madhu*, *amrita*, without which the gods themselves could not be immortal."¹ It is this poetic delight which gives the touch of immortality to all poetry.

But this Ananda, the Platonic divine possession and enthusiasm which is the fountain of poetic delight is not any mental or vital enjoyment of life or the pleasure of the imagination as is usually understood today,—when poetry is defined in terms of pleasure, for example, as 'the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason,'—but the deeper rapture of the soul in pure sources of feeling. The passions must first be transmuted into spiritual experience or they must "have undergone the purification, the Katharsis, spoken of by the Greek critic" before they can be changed into poetic matter. "The life values are only poetic when they have come out heightened and changed into soul-values."

This is the *rasa* which the ancient Indian critics laid down as the essence of poetry. This is a profound impersonal delight of the spirit in all

¹ "The Future Poetry"

things whatever their nature independent of the personal reactions of the mind. The poet seeks the Rasa of the universal from the aesthetic emotion or from the physical lines or from the mental form of beauty or from the inner sense and power alike of that from which the ordinary man turns away and of that to which he is attached by a sense of pleasure. He brings the real soul to the surface and therefore in place of the egoistic standards of pleasure and pain he has an equal, an all-embracing delight. That is the reason why we enjoy and taste the sorrowful, the terrible or even the most horrible and ugly things in art and poetry. In the universal creative Ananda all these are transmutation into forms of poetic delight. The aesthetic reception of contacts is quite different from our customary ordinary contact with things. It is a contact not of the mind but of the soul. "For the universal soul all things and all contacts of things carry in them an essence of delight best described by the Sanskrit aesthetic term *rasa*, which means at once sap or essence of a thing and its taste."¹ In art and poetry we seek only the essence of a thing and therefore we attain to something of this capacity for variable but universal delight of existence in all its variations in the aesthetic reception. We are entirely detached, disinterested in mind and heart, not thinking of ourselves or of self-defence. The universality of this delight Sri Aurobindo explains by the existence in the poet of the delight soul, the divine alchemy which transmutes all experience into Ananda. "The poet has in him a double personality, a double instrument of his response to life and existence. There is in him the normal man absorbed in mere living who thinks and feels and acts like others, and there is the seer of things, the supernormal man, the super-soul or delight-soul in touch with the impersonal and eternal fountains of joy and beauty who creates from that source and transmutes by its alchemy all experience into a form of the spirit's Ananda. . . . it is spiritual transmutation of the substance got by sinking the mental and vital interests in a deeper soul experience which brings the inevitable word and the supreme form and the unanalysable rhythm."² Sri Aurobindo holds that it is only in going back to these creative fountains of the spirit's Ananda and getting back to the ancient worship of delight as opposed to the modern mind's indulgence in the vulgar and ignoble things of a materialistic and utilitarian civilisation that there lies the salvation for our poetry in the future. He points out how the secret of the great influence exercised by the poetry in ancient India, Vedas and Upanishads, the poetry of the Vaishnavas and

¹ "The Life Divine"

² "The Future Poetry"

Shaivas in shaping the very soul of the race and creating a greater life, for it lay entirely in the fact that it was a poetry of spiritual Ananda created from the depths of the soul, an "expression through poetic delight of the soul of a people." And if English poetry also wants to be as mighty and effective as the life of the people, then it can be possible only by getting back to the deeper delight of the spirit in the inner vision of existence.

A spiritual Ananda does not imply that the poet has to be blind to the universe around him. On the contrary he holds that his joy in man and the universe will be more perfect as he gets nearer to the absolute Ananda. Writing about the substance of such a greater poetry of the future Sri Aurobindo observes, "The beauty and delight of all physical things illumined by the wonder of the secret spiritual self that is the inhabitant and self-sculptor of form, the beauty and delight of the thousand-coloured many-crested million-waved miracle of life made a hundred times more profoundly meaningful by the greatness and the sweetness and attracting poignancy of the self-creating inmost soul which makes of life its epic and its drama and its lyre, the beauty and delight of the spirit in thought, the seer, the thinker, the interpreter of his own creation and being who broods over all he is and does in man and the world and constantly rises and shapes it new by the stress and power of thinking, this will be the substance of the greater poetry that has yet to be written." He thus comprehends all the levels of poetic delight in his view of the greater poetry of spiritual Ananda—in the delight of the physical mind, of the life soul, of the thought-mind and finally of the intuitive mind and the spirit, for all are changed and uplifted into the new values of spiritual delight. The various levels are only the different provinces of action of one poetic Ananda like the diverse planes of poetic truth.

But such a supreme ecstasy, an intense capacity for the delight in things and a universal Ananda is possible only in the overhead plane. Therefore to produce poetry of this high order it is necessary for a poet to draw inspiration from the overmind.

The identity of truth and beauty of which Keats sang in his memorable line, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty", which we all need to know as the law of our aesthetic knowledge was a truth which holds good not in the plane of the lower consciousness that is inherently subject to the conflicting dualities but in the overmind Consciousness. Thus while distinguishing the action of the overmind from that of certain lower levels of the overmind where the distinction between truth and beauty is valid, the Master observes, "But also there is another action of overmind which sees and thinks and creates in masses, which reunites and creates in

separated things, which reconciles opposites. On that level truth and beauty not only become constant companions but become one, involved in each other, inseparable; on that level the true is always beautiful and the beautiful is always true. Their highest fusion perhaps only takes place in the supermind; but overmind at its summits draws enough of the supramental light to see what the Supermind sees and do what the Supermind does though in a lower key and with a less absolute truth and power.”¹

The poet has to transcend his ordinary mental self and take his stand on an overhead foundation. Sri Aurobindo admits the possibility of experiencing a universal delight also on the mental and vital plane but at the same time he holds that such an experience cannot be permanent. It is only in the overhead consciousness that it can become the very law of the poet's nature. “In the overmind we have a first firm foundation of the experience of a universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight. These things can come on the mental and vital plane even before those planes are directly touched or influenced by the spiritual consciousness; but they are there a temporary experience and not permanent or they are limited in their field and do not touch the whole being. They are a glimpse and not a change of vision or a change of nature. The artist for instance can look at things only plain or shabby or ugly or even repulsive to the ordinary sense of them, and see in them and bring out of them beauty and the delight that goes with beauty. But this is a sort of special grace for the artistic Consciousness and is limited within the field of his art. In the overhead Consciousness, especially in the overmind, these things become more and more the law of the vision and the law of the nature.”² It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo looks upon overmind as the source of the greatest poetry.

JAGADISH SARAN AGARWAL

¹ Mystic Poetry—*Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, 1946

NEW HUMANISM

THE seers have declared that whenever a great crisis threatens the very foundations of human civilization, the Divine in person descends on this earth as its saviour. If this is true, never in the history of the human being a more appropriate time had come for Him to manifest. It seems as if the human being, in the limitations cast out for him, has reached the limit of his development and also degradation. For though he has achieved immense success in knowing the workings of Nature and harnessing its energies for his own benefit, he has failed miserably to solve the tangle of his social relations. Today he is, therefore, both great and small, great in knowing and controlling Nature, but small in knowing his own nature, his own self. The crisis that faces modern human civilization is brought forth by the loss of balance between his outer and inner progress. That is why by the side of immense wealth stark poverty is stinking in the nostrils of the few that enjoy or, by the side of stray dizzy heights of intellect, we see the deep abyss of mass ignorance. Quite naturally the honest among them are engrossed with the problem of bridging the gulfs between such wide inequities.

Without being professional intellectual sceptics of the ultra-modern type or fatalistic pessimists of the religious type we can notice that the way the carriage of the present civilization is trudging is not very heartening. Rather one is inclined to believe that the catastrophe may be waiting for the world at the next turn, if nobody guides it to a new path. Of course, we are not with those who doubt the validity of scientific knowledge or exult in pointing out admitted flaws that challenge its reliability, because so far science has not failed in its avowed object of knowing the world partially. We say partially because human knowledge will always be meagre when compared with what is to be known. At the same time, we do not want to deceive ourselves into a false position that all the present problems will be solved in course of time by the acquisition of scientific knowledge. There are many who claim that the quantity of human happiness will increase with the increase in such scientific knowledge. They would always point out to the untraversed portion of knowledge and say that the moment we land there, our ills will vanish and we will be more happy. The disgruntled, the sufferer, the miserable would ask them, 'Well, we have walked not an insignificant distance with you and if today our comforts have increased in number, our sufferings have surely won the race against them. Today with all the achievements of science, not only we are not any better off but, on the contrary, we are brought on the brink

of total annihilation, should anybody misfire the results of our scientific researches.' The crux of the whole problem is, therefore, whether such knowledge alone will bring happiness to mankind or there is yet an unknown but essential factor for us to achieve.

Those who swear by Materialism—and here any variety of it is all the same for us—are nervous to find that there is a stampede of modern men in search of God. This is a wrong course, they declare, because it implies a lowering of a standard of revolt of man, the standard under which he has achieved so much in such a short period of time. It is customary among political propagandists and professional philosophers or revolutionaries to give first a bad name to anything they dislike and then condemn it for the same. If medieval religion fanatically opposed the Industrial Revolution and the insurgent Materialism it was not because Religion was entrenched under Truth but because it was afraid that lacking the essential vitalism in itself of the coming ideology it might lose the battle. And history has shown that it lost. The medieval religion, and for that matter almost all religions, had their defects in that they claimed prematurely that they really led humanity to Divine Reality and this obscured their real function making themselves an easy prey to Materialism which possessed great vitality. Sri Aurobindo says, "Religion has opened itself to denial by its claim to determine the truth by divine authority, by inspiration, by a sacrosanct and infallible sovereignty given to it from on high; it has sought to impose itself on human thought, feeling, conduct without discussion or question. This is an excessive and premature claim, although imposed in a way on the religious idea by the imperative and absolute character of the inspirations and illuminations which are its warrant and justification and by the necessity of faith as an occult light and power from the soul amidst the mind's ignorance, doubts, weakness, incertitudes."¹

The confusion made by the opponents of religion between spiritualism and religion is common. No doubt the credit for raising the level of human happiness or well-being during the past few centuries goes to Materialism or its twin brother Scientific Knowledge. But if religion, as understood by its opponents, has failed it was because it laid false claim to Truth, Power and Happiness. Religion demanded from its followers unquestionable acceptance without anything behind it and that likened it to autocracy, or in the present-day terminology, dictatorship of those who claimed to know or live in God. According to Sri Aurobindo such "Claim to unquestionable acceptance could only be warranted if the spiritual effort

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol II, pp. 869-70

had already achieved man's progression to the highest Truth-Consciousness total and integral, free from all ignorant mental and vital mixture."¹

However, in spite of their attack on religion what they intend to serve even more zealously and fanatically than the orthodox religion—is no other than the cause of Humanity at large. But theirs is a struggle for humanity without any reference to God or its creator. Perhaps this is due to the fact that human beings take pride that standing at the apex of material evolution they have no further progress to make so far as their species is concerned. In short Man does not desire for transformation but for heightening or sublimation of his qualities only. They claim that since the present Man is the last term in the evolution of biological species there is no further scope for the transformation of his qualities especially his reason or mind, but only for sublimation. Their main concern is to deal with that only which comes within the compass of reason or is rational. All that falls outside is irrational, mystic or unreal.

Nobody would quarrel that man should start all his inquiries and problems from the examination of his own self, making himself as the centre. For, man can doubt anything but his own existence. The statement "I know" is dependent on the fact that "I exist and therefore know". Also it is true that human ego has an important place in the course of material evolution. Consciousness in the human being is truly an important stage in the general evolution of Consciousness, for it is here that the individual ego first made its appearance on this earth. The individual consciousness is a great achievement and any philosophy, religion or movement which tried to efface it or merge it in an impersonal consciousness or entity could not and would not appeal to humanity in general. Even then, Humanism could not satisfy the human inquisitiveness to know the further of humanism or in other words spiritualism. All the human problems remained unsolved and they would remain so till humanism is harmonised with spiritualism. In other words a theory of divinisation of human beings, transformation of human beings, can alone save Humanism from its inherent defects.

Recently, finding that Humanism is unable to solve correctly the ever rising problems of humanity, a new theory, viz., New Humanism has been advanced as a sure panacea for all human ills. According to it, a new perspective, a new horizon is opened. This theory starts from certain convictions of its own. One of these is that man is essentially rational and that the concept of a law-governed universe is not a mere projection of the metaphysical Pure Reason.

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 869-70

As all our present ideologies are dyed deeply in the colour of Western metaphysics this could not be an exception. The very fact that they could not see anything beyond Pure Reason is sufficient to show that they could not see, or rather to be correct, could not reason anything beyond the abstract entity of Kant. Pure Reason being an abstract category, it becomes an easy proposition to fling at their opponents that no world could be projected out of such stuffless abstract category. They ignore, or perhaps do not know, that the world was not created out of a nihil, that "in the creating of the material worlds there was a plunge of this descending consciousness into an apparent Inconscience."¹ There was never any projection of Matter out of a void or any abstract term.

Second, they hold that instincts and intuitions are not elementary definables, categories, not to be further analysed, but are rational behaviours of organism. That instincts and intuitions should be bundled up together without any clarification is an example of how Humanism is indifferent about the different shades of human mind. There are different kinds of intuitions and though some of them are akin to instincts, it cannot be said of all intuitions, least of all those which stand mid-way between mind and overmind. According to Sri Aurobindo, "There is an intuition in Matter which holds the action of the material Energy together and dictates the organisation of the material world from the electron to the sun and planets and their contents. There is an intuition in Life which similarly supports and guides the play and development of Life in Matter till it is ready for the mental evolution of which man is the vehicle. In man also creation follows the same upward process,—the Intuition within develops according to the stage he has reached in his progress. Even the precise intellect of the scientist who is inclined to deny the separate existence or the superiority of Intuition yet cannot really move forward unless there is behind him a mental intuition, which enables him to take a forward step or to divine what has to be done. Intuition therefore is present at the beginning of things and in their middle as well as at their consummation. But Intuition takes its proper form only when one goes beyond the mental into the spiritual domain, for there only it comes fully forward from behind the veil and reveals its true and complete nature."² Thus intuition cannot be said to be the accompaniment of rational organism, but rather a secret mode of Consciousness working throughout the creation. The New Humanists are acquainted with Intuition only through the term

(¹) *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*

(²) *ibid.*

used by Bergson and that is why they declare rashly that "with this philosophy (which places intuition above intelligence) man may be a robot and as such he appears like a 'Prometheus Bound'. But, they say in this way he forfeits his humanness: since the robot is not a creator; he is an instrument of creation by some other agency. The intuitionism, that is to say, irrationalism of scientific philosophers like Bergson, they further declare, laid the philosophical foundation of Fascism." Today it has become fashionable to condemn one's opponent as fascist before striking him. In that way a man who leads his blind brother to a safer place can also be called a fascist because the latter would be called upon to obey his leader in matters regarding Light! The concept of intuition in Bergson's philosophy was defective in many respects:¹ but to make it an ally of Fascism—or even of Communism, as some others have tried to do—is a far cry.

The humanists are afraid that man will forfeit his humanness and his rationalism, the moment his consciousness is transformed. In such transformation surely he does not become a robot but a conscious associate of Life Divine. Perhaps that also is not a happy position for man according to them. They bemoan the prospect that man in such a scheme becomes a robot and not a creator. It is doubtful whether man alone is a real creator in this world today, or behind his creations there does not lurk the hand of superior or inferior forces that are for the time being veiled. Second, is it sufficient for man to be a creator, irrespective of what he creates? If he creates a world which is nothing short of hell, would not a robot fulfilling the divine Will be preferable?

All the defects in theories about Humanism are due to the fact that they have not known Man or Human Being. For an appropriate study of Man the standpoint must be both outward and inward. And to study human being inwardly means a close observation of one's own inner experiences. It is not sufficient to have only a logical but also a psychological approach, even at the cost of losing some of the fundamental axioms of logic in the study of our inner being. If inner experiences reveal man in an aspect different from that conceived by logic, the former has to be accepted, for reason is only a part of human consciousness which exceeds it. It is Yoga which gives the necessary apparatus to experiment in this inner domain. One can have the experience about the nature of the human self only by following the laws and regulations of Yoga, just as one has to abide by the regulations and technique of a physics laboratory to know the laws of physics.

After all what is this Reason and Rationality but a fragment of our inner

(¹) Vide Dr. S. K. Maitra's article in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Vol. I

self; and hence one cannot hope to reach the goal of Truth by the solitary power of a fragment. At the most "The intellectual Reason can only point vaguely or feel gropingly towards or try to indicate partial and even conflicting aspects of manifestations here; it cannot enter into and know it."¹ It cannot have knowledge by identity, as is the case with the channels of consciousness, but only by inference which is bound to remain prejudicial on account of its association with the body, vital or mind, as the case may be.

A further conviction of theirs is that a secular morality is possible, and that the sanction for moral behaviour, the criterion for value-judgment, is furnished by the innate rationality of the human being. They are aware to this extent that some sort of sanction is required and that that is readily available in the innate rationality. But they do not care to probe into the inner vaults of mind to know what makes this innate rationality. If they should introspect they would find that the source of all the "Innateness" is in the divine core which is veiled until it is brought to the front. Ordinarily this core throws out its influences to the outward mind to reveal itself as "Conscience". Of course even then there is all likelihood that before its rays reach the outer self they are obscured by the predilections of body, vital desires and mental prejudices. That is why "Consciences" of different individuals are at variance and mostly give conflicting judgments to their holders on different problems. This innate rationality is not therefore always a safe guide to Truth and hence secular morality based on it can hardly be said to be cent per cent above reproach. It is only when man has removed the obstructions in the way of innate rationality or conscience that he can get at the Truth and correct judgment of all values of the world. Then alone can he hear the unfailing and clear voice of his own self which is a portion of the Divine. Thus in order to have a correct interpretation of the innate judgment one has to rely not on the rational behaviour of bodily organism but on the core of our self which owes its light to the light of the Divine. The way of knowing the inmost core is the way of self-control, purification and silencing of outside influences, of body, vital or mind, the very influences on which Humanism wants to rely. It is the way of Yoga and hence it is very doubtful whether the New Humanist would ever accept it.

But the New Humanists are shy to be called dogmatic. They claim that they have subjected Materialism to searching analysis in the light of recent scientific researches, because they hold that Materialism is not a closed system of thought—a bunch of dogmas. It requires continuous readjustment. The greatest defect of Materialism was, according to them, that its cosmo-

¹ *The Riddle of This World*—Sri Aurobindo

logy did not seem to have any connection with ethics. But such a mixture of ethics with Materialism, or in the words of Humanists 'Integral Humanism' would satisfy neither the materialist nor the spiritualist. It is nothing but a drift in the sea of ideologies, going nowhere, leading nowhere, but on the move *ad infinitum*.

Humanism, if it means true service to humanity by formulating a correct philosophy of action, should first try to understand Man in all his aspects. For that it will have to shed its physical prejudices. It must not merely look at the physical aspect but into the psychological side of the question too. For a correct grasp of the main principle of consciousness behind all the manifestation, of which man is only an intermediate term, we will have to reverse the metaphysical position of the materialist, including the New Humanist, that it is consciousness which comes prior to material universe and not vice versa. There is a link between Inconscient Matter and Conscious Life. It is one Consciousness that is trying to manifest itself through various stages and the stage of man is not the final one. Through man and through him alone the Divine Consciousness will manifest, transforming him and his life into a Life Divine.

The Humanists of today aspire to enlarge the scope of creativeness in man to a greater and greater degree without changing the basis of his consciousness, without attempting at transformation. History has been a sorry witness to such individual and collective attempts made in the past and also to their failures in achieving the cherished goal of human happiness. No doubt such vital and mental men have had an immense effect upon the earth-life. "They have carried humanity forward from the mere animal to what it is now. But it is only within bounds of the already established evolutionary formula of the human being that they can act; they can enlarge the human circle but not change or transform the principle of consciousness or its characteristic operation. Any attempt to heighten inordinately the vital man, a Nietzschean supermanhood, for example, can only colossalize the human creature, it cannot transform or divinise him."² The urgent task before men today is not of colossalizing this or that type of man but of transformation into his divine prototype for the sake of the establishment of a Divine Life on this earth. His mission should also be not a mere egoistic concern for his own development but to play a willing and helpful part in the whole scheme of Divine Manifestation on this earth.

VASANTA K. DONDE

² *The Life Divine*, Vol II, p. 652

REVIEWS

(I)

Education for a New World By *Maria Montessori, M.D., D. Litt.*
Arundale Montessori Training Centre, Adyar, Madras. Price Rs. 4-8-0

This is the latest book of Madam Maria Montessori, the world-famous Italian educationist, who has been for quite a few years holding training courses in her system at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras. Her presence and the training centre, conducted by herself, have given in India a great fillip to the cause of pre-school education generally and the Montessori System particularly.

Madam Montessori has devoted more than forty long years of her life to the study of the child and to the evolving and perfecting of her educational system, which has been comprehensively set forth in a few volumes published earlier. The present book gives within a short compass of 107 pages the author's most fundamental ideas as the ripe fruit of a rich and creative educational life.

The personality of Madam Montessori speaks through the pages of the book in clear and vivid notes. Her faith in the child, reverence for child nature, devotion and dedication to the study of the child, insight and penetration into the inner workings of the child, almost a mystic sympathy for the child, it is highly elevating and inspiring to experience, as one goes through the evolving exposition of the book.

The book aims at an education for a new world. But it is concerned with the child at the pre-school stage, that is, up to the sixth year of his age. The reason of it itself constitutes a fundamental idea of the author. She has through prolonged observation of child behaviour come to recognise two distinct stages in the growth of the child. From birth to the end of the third year is for her educationally the most effective period. The child has at this stage what she calls the "absorbent mind", which essentially works sub-consciously and effects a complete transformation in him. Education "is not a question of development but of creation out of nothing", for the individual "seems to start from a zero". The absorbent mind is compared to "a photographic plate, automatically recording impressions in the minutest details". Thus the child during the first three years is supposed to sub-consciously take up the infinite impressions of the environment, which, however, are consciously availed of later on.

From the third to the sixth year he avails himself of the faculties formed subconsciously earlier for the acquisition of language and the growth of character generally. These first six years are, to our author, decisive in forming the individual's personality. Hence her pleading has an obvious force when she says that "if we wish to alter the habits and customs of a country or if we wish to accentuate more vigorously the characteristics of a people, we must take, as our instrument, the child, for very little can be done in this direction by acting upon the adults." (p. 34). Education is for her "a natural process spontaneously carried out" by the child. It does not consist of "Listening to words but of experiences upon the environment." The teacher has simply to afford to the child the prepared environment necessary for cultural growth, but otherwise stand back. Doing so we can hope to see "the rising of the New Man who will not be the victim of events but will have clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society." (p. 4). It is thus that an education for a new world has entirely to concentrate on the child.

It is undoubtedly an inspiring message, and we would agree that it is essentially education which can create a new man and a new world. But we are rather keen on knowing the character of the new man that is attempted and the concrete educational process which aims at producing him.

Each educational system stands upon and proceeds from a particular view of human personality, whose soundness usually provides a test for the educational system.

Here in connection with the consideration of the Montessori System too the best that we can do is to examine the author's conception of the child's personality.

We have already stated that the child is to our author almost a mystic entity, worthy of all respect, which has to be allowed to grow according to its own laws. All that we have to do to help it grow up into a fine specimen of the New Man is not to interfere. The first three years are the absorbent period and the next three the years of activity, through which the child builds up his personality.

The child is virtually a "psychic entity" and the use of the senses and walking and talking and the rest of the activities, which help the child to become independent, make their appearance after the first stage of simple absorption of impressions from the environment is passed.

Embryology affords to our author the model for the growth of the human psyche. Like the embryo the human psyche too, she says "starts from what appears to be nothing, for in the new-born child also, physically speaking, there seems to be nothing already built up, and organs are built up around

a point of sensitivity; here too there is accumulation of material and this is done by the absorbent mind. After that come points of sensitivity, so intense as to be hardly imaginable to the adult mind, as shown in the acquisition of language. From these points of sensitivity it is not the psyche that is developed but the organs that the psyche will need. Here also, each organ develops independently of the rest; for instance, speech, ability to judge distances or to find orientations in an environment, ability to stand on two legs, and other co-ordinations. Each develops around an interest so acute that it attracts the child towards a certain state of action. In each case after the organ has been formed the sensitivity disappears; when all the organs are ready they unite to form the psychic entity." (pp. 25-26).

The atomistic concept of human personality involved in the above quotation is much compensated for by the emphasis laid on unity in another connection. While stressing the place of environment in education, she says "Movement is the best part that completes the cycle of growth and spiritual uplift is attained through action and work" (p. 58). Further "Mind and movement are two parts of a single cycle, and movement is the superior expression." (p. 58). Another statement is still more emphatic. "The pedagogical world is guided by human logic, but nature has other laws. Logic distinguishes between mental and physical activities, saying that for mental work we must sit still in the class, and for physical work the mental part is not wanted, so it cuts the child in two." (p. 79).

There is one thing more to complete this general statement of Madam Montessori's conception of human personality. She affirms that "imagination in the child is usually expended on toys and fairy tales, but surely we can give him real things to imagine about, so putting him in more accurate relation with his environment."

We stated earlier that educational ideology has necessarily to proceed from a particular conception of human personality both in regard to its nature and the process of its growth. Where such conception is an unconscious or implied assumption, the final educational ideology is bound to show difficulty in the cohesiveness of its structure.

The Montessori System naturally appeared as a reform movement combatting against an educational system which is now well-nigh dead. The system is one of the major educational movements which ushered in the era of the child. But in reacting against the older system it had to over-emphasise many things. Further, the science of psychology during the last two decades has succeeded in establishing beyond doubt certain facts of personality which no educational system can afford to ignore without a risk to its own soundness.

The above account of the character of human personality as also that of growth considered from the point of view of our best psychological knowledge presents difficulties.

The Montessori System, in fact, retains the intellectualistic bias of the older system it sought to remedy. It too regards man "by nature an intellectual being". The subconscious is essentially concerned with the storing and discrimination of impressions. The sense organs are the first things to be cultivated. This is really sensationist psychology, which is unsupportable in the light of the facts of mind and behaviour known today. The emphasis on activity occupies only a secondary position.

Whatever the differences amongst the radically opposed contemporary schools of psychology they are largely agreed upon two facts of personality:

1. that personality is a relatively unified fact of psycho-physical behaviour and that it is so from the very beginning. The unity is not later added on.
2. that personality is essentially active and conative in nature. Experience is "the process of becoming expert through experiment" and not the storing up of sensations.

The nature of mental growth is an equally fundamental concept in the educational science. And Madam Montessori has in this connection rightly sought a model in embryology. But in interpreting the facts of biological growth, we fear the additive concept of growth has been superimposed. Actually growth is a process of differentiation out of what is originally homogeneous. It is a specialisation of function in the cells, which were originally alike. There is surely no preformed miniature figure present in the fertilised egg. But the fundamental fact of embryonic growth is that the same fertilised egg through cellular division produces the millions and billions of the cells of the organism which through the internal stimuli as determined by the relation of the parts to the whole grow into specialised organs.

The same holds good *mutatis mutandis* for the mental growth. There is, to start with, "an unanalysed whole" of experience or "a booming buzzing confusion" as W. James had said. This state of experience then starts growing in complexity under the stress of two conditions: the intensity of external stimuli and the interest of the individual. The process is essentially one of differentiation of a whole of experience, which is originally implicit, inchoate and more or less homogeneous.

The concept of the absorbent mind too is vulnerable. We have great difficulty in visualising the mind and the psyche of the child during the first three years subconsciously discriminating and storing up impressions and thereby achieving a transformation for him. There is hardly any doubt regarding the fact that some of the basic attitudes of life do get formed

during these early years and largely become determining factors for life. But these attitudes may also be formed as a result of the active mind seeking satisfaction for its impulsions. It hardly seems necessary to posit a sort of mystic power for these early years of the child, which he later on loses as the price to be paid for "the acquisition of full human consciousness".

The facts of continuity in the evolution from the animal to the human life justify no more than this that the child, to start with, possesses a few instinctive urges and some reflex actions. With their aid he sets out on his adventure of independence and conquest of environment. When language and thought appear he gets two further powerful instruments. The same facts of evolution do not justify the idea that an individual starts from a zero.

The Montessori System is at its best in the treatment and employment of the activity urge. The system seeks to characterise the evolving interest of the child from stage to stage and plan the educational means for its growth and satisfaction. There the psychology and the practice of the system combine to make of it such an eminent success.

The concept of "a spontaneous discipline" which is a consequence of the appreciation of the activity urge of the child, is the most brilliant idea in the whole field of modern education. Madam Montessori puts it paradoxically, but it is so true; "to obtain discipline, give freedom", simply let the child have the occupations that interest him.

Regarding the role of the teacher too the contribution of Madam Montessori is equally great. "The task of the teacher", she says, "becomes therefore a preparation of motives of cultural activity spread over a specially prepared environment and then refraining from obstrusive interference." The old teacher used to teach too much. He imposed his benevolent activity on the child who was expected to assimilate things with perfect passivity. The Montessori teacher's point of honour consists in being able to say that the children are able to carry on by themselves. He has helped them to help themselves.

We have so far considered and viewed the Montessori System by the best standard of contemporary psychology and educational science. We have ourselves a point of view which would really carry us beyond contemporary psychology and education and in fact we had hoped to see something of that in this book, "Education for a New World", coming as it does with the blessings of the Theosophical Society.

We would recall here that Madam Montessori contemplates in connection with her educational system the rising of a New Man, "who will not be the victim of events". She in fact speaks of "the discovery of the soul

of the child". These are undoubtedly the highest ideals for any education. But what is it that we mean by them and how are they to be realised?

All our modern education contemplates in the first instance the cultivation of the intellect, it attends to the body secondarily, emotion and will are however left over to an incidental cultivation. More than that it does not attempt. In fact it does not know of anything else in the personality of man. The consequences of such an education are a most interesting cultural study. The intellectual man, the ideal of modern education, has created the modern intellectualistic culture with its inevitable sharp contradictions and divisions. The "abstractness" and "exclusiveness" so vital to the clarity of concepts, the stock-in-trade of the intellectual activity, have invaded the entire cultural life of man and the result is a terrible conflict of sharply opposed ideologies in thought, sociology and politics.

We lack a sense for wholeness, find it difficult even to contemplate it. But the present human situation is obviously a crisis marking the culmination of a particular cultural adventure of man. An education for a new world had evidently to fully diagnose the present cultural situation. The man who will not be a victim of the events has first to master what is environmental in himself.

Contemporary Psychology has, through Jung for example, felt obliged to recognise the existence of a "centre" in human personality, which is marked essentially by the quality of wholeness. The rest is all in the nature of an endowment or instrumentation. Now the education, which has to call forth into activity the best potentialities of man must call forth above all the one fundamental potentiality, which is capable of giving unity and perspective to all the varied talents of the individual.

The yogic and mystic experience, as a whole, bears testimony to the existence of such a supreme principle in human personality as a matter of direct experience. This principle has been traditionally called the soul, but Sri Aurobindo and the Mother choose to call it the Psychic Being. The Psychic Being is to them the dynamic aspect of the soul. It is the form of consciousness which by its quality holds out the best promise for the education and the culture of man. The education of the future, we would say, will have to learn the ways and the means by which to bring into play this deep fact of human personality and thereby facilitate a balanced growth of the other members.

It is not possible here to consider more fully the conditions of the psychic consciousness. But what we would emphasise is that the true and the highest potentiality of man, the potentiality which gives the proper balance and proportion to his intellect, emotion and will, is his soul or the psychic being.

And an education conscious of its own great possibilities has evidently to work with that end in view. Such an education alone will realise the New Man who will be no victim of the events. He will indeed usher in the New World.

I. S.

(II)

Tales and Parables of Sri Ramkrishna. Published by *Sri Ramkrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras*. Price Rs. 3-8-0 (pp. 273 + 45).

The human mind loves the concrete. Constituted as it is, it does not take kindly to things in the abstract. Subtle thoughts, concepts of an abstruse kind have little appeal to the generality of men and no wonder, great Teachers—particularly in the East—have adopted various devices to convey the spirit of their teachings and ideals to the common man as well as to the earnest seeker. The symbol, the allegory, the parable—these have been employed with remarkable directness from time immemorial to clothe recondite ideas in concrete vestures which could leave an impress with ease and stamp themselves on the unclosed mind of the hearer. Jesus Christ used the medium of the parable to communicate the thought and spirit of the Wisdom that was his. The Buddha made handy use of it and so have done other Teachers. In our own age, the most active instance of tales and parables used as an effective means is that of Sri Ramkrishna who diffused the riches of his own large spiritual treasure in legends and stories taken from life which have brought the genial personality of the Paramahansa close to the heart of everyone who knows something of his life.

‘An earthly story with a heavenly meaning’—that is how some one described the Parable. And the parables collected in the edition before us answer very well to this description. Classified under convenient heads, these have a story-content which is as entertaining as the didactic element is profound. Each is a gem and choice is difficult.

Look at the raillery that is at once serious and rich with wisdom, that shatters to pieces the proud learning of the bookworm:

“It is not mentioned in their ‘Science’ that God can take human form; so how can they believe it? There are such men indeed!

Listen to a story. A man said to his friend, ‘I have just seen a house fall down with a terrific crash.’ Now, the friend to whom he told this had received an English education. He said: ‘Just a minute. Let me look it up in the newspaper.’ He read the paper but could not find the news of a house falling down with a crash. Thereupon he said to

his friend: 'Well, I don't believe you. It isn't in the paper; so it is all false.'"

Or turn to his incisive logic, the home-thrusts that carry wisdom and modesty to the vain disciple:

"The great Shankaracharya had a foolish disciple, who used to imitate his Master in all matters. Shankara uttered 'Shivoham' (I am Shiva): the disciple also repeated 'Shivoham'. To correct his disciple's folly, Shankara one day, while passing by a smithy, took a potful of molten iron and swallowed it; and he asked that disciple also to do the same. Of course, the disciple could not imitate this act of his Master, and thenceforward he left off saying 'Shivoham'."

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The Story of a Dedicated Life. Price Rs. 3-0-0 (pp. 220 + 11).

God and Divine Incarnations. By *Swami Ramakrishnananda*. Price Rs. 2-4-0 (pp. 160).

The Ancient Quest. By *Swami Ramakrishnananda*. Price Rs. 1-8-0 (pp. 130)

The above three books are published by Sri Ramkrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras.

It may be a historical accident, as we are told, that South India has been the repository of Indian culture and tradition because she has been far removed from the scene of foreign invasions and political vicissitudes in the North. But there seems to be something more, something in the very make-up of the sons of her soil which accounts for their ready response to the demands of Tradition—religious and spiritual—in spite of their predilections for intellectual subtleties in which few could excel them. This spirit of conservatism in the South is proverbial,—and notorious at that—so much so that when Swami Vivekananda was approached by some leading citizens of Madras to start a centre in these parts to continue the work he had begun, he is said to have replied "I shall send you one who is more orthodox than your most orthodox men of the South, one who is at the same time unique and unsurpassed in his worship and meditation of God." And on whom else could his choice fall but on Swami Ramakrishnananda whose devotion to the Master and his Ideal was as outstanding as his faith in and reverence for the Hindu Dharma? It is a moving story of his life that is recorded in this well-documented book—*Story of a Dedicated Life*.

Born of an orthodox Brahmin family, Sashi—for that was his pre-monastic name—breathed in his childhood the atmosphere of devotion and worship.

His contact with the Paramahansa when he was just out of his teens, deepened his conviction of the possibility of communion with the Divine through Prayer and Worship and his life took a decisive turn towards Service to the Guru who personified for the young devotee all that stood for God. He identified himself with service to the person of the Teacher and it was so complete that there was no room for a separate individuality of his being, of his Sadhana even. "What St. Paul declared in his Epistle to the Galatian—'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me', described perfectly the Swami's attitude towards himself and his Guru." (p. 125).

After the passing of the Master, Ramakrishnananda took charge of the sacred relics and initiated worship of his likeness, for to him the Guru was ever-living. As is so truthfully remarked in the foreword 'the worship of the Master was the Centre round which his whole life revolved. Like his Master who communed with Kali in the Dakshineshwar temple, he felt the Master's living presence in the shrine...It was a spiritual education to see the Swami...doing the worship.' He demonstrated in his own life that worship is no mere ritual; it could be a powerful channel of contact and growth towards the Ideal worshipped. And to this day, wherever there is a centre of the Order, the tradition set by the Swami is faithfully kept up to the manifest benefit of the devotees.

Swami Ramakrishnananda accepted Swami Vivekananda, his Gurubhai, as the leader. There was, we note, a close affinity between the two in spite of the difference in their stress on particular aspects of the many-sided Teaching of their Master. On the very night Swami Vivekananda breathed his last, as Ramakrishnananda sat in meditation, he heard a familiar voice ringing out clearly "Sashi, Sashi, I have spat out the body" (p. 142). That was the first intimation he had of the event.

When Swamiji arrived in Madras in 1897, he found he had to start literally from a scratch. Public sympathy is rather tardy in its course for taking material shape and the Swami displayed phenomenal energy and devotion to the cause of building up the infant Math. Indeed as the Publisher feelingly puts it, he was 'the *Vasuki*, who held the Ramakrishna Order on his hood before it could find home in the hearts of men'. While it is true that men are but instruments and are *made* for the hour it cannot be denied that the rapid growth and country-wide expansion of the Ramakrishna Order in the south are truly the outflowing of the dedicated life that was Swami Ramakrishnananda.

Like most men of action he was thorough. We learn, for instance, that when he was engaged in writing the life of Sri Ramanujacharya in Bengali—a classic of its kind in that tongue—Swamiji toured in the interior districts, contacted and interrogated many Vaishnava scholars and gathered material at first-hand. No means was too small for him, no opportunity too slight for awakening man to the call of the Soul. (Vide his meeting with Sarat Chandra Chatterji the famous novelist, p. 105). He poured himself out in writings, debates and discourses from which a representative selection is presented in the other two books before us.

Of these the first compilation, *God and Divine Incarnations*, deals with problems of cosmology. The universe and the individual in it are the constant care of the Maker who is not all above. Myriad are the ways of his aid to Man. He himself descends (avatarana) into this world of Ignorance at crucial turns in the march of Time and meets situations outside the ken of man to handle. An interesting and useful account of the seven Avatars, viz., Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama and Sri Krishna, forms a substantial part of this book. The time is past when these records of the landmarks in the history of man could be dismissed as pure Myth. Incidentally we might refer the sceptic to what Mme. Blavatsky has to say on the subject in her *Isis Unveiled*.

The other collection, *The Ancient Quest*, as its title indicates, devotes itself mainly to the individual aspect of the eternal Question that has loomed large before man ever since he awoke to thought. "The earliest pre-occupation of man in his awakened thoughts, and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate pre-occupation...manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality." (Sri Aurobindo). Indeed all enlightened quest leads to this ancient, in fact, eternal Quest. Why is man seized with this quest? How shall he meet it? Will it ever end? These and allied questions of practical importance are raised and answered sharply in these lectures.

There is something singular in Swamiji's way of putting simple words and simple figures to telling effect. "Where does the Great God live?" he asks. "Man is his abode...this is the real temple of God. Temples have, as you know, five walls just as man has five sheaths and one must pass them all to come to God in the inner shrine. That is the seat of God." (p. 69). But, 'the senses are in your way.' Man is a slave of the senses and if he seeks entrance into the Sanctuary it is imperative that he should rise above their hold and be their master. For 'the army should not be allowed to lead the Commander-in-Chief. If it does, then the battle is sure to be lost.' (p. 42). In similar graphic imagery, he proceeds to delineate the possible lines of approach, the inevitable points of conflict and the destined crown of victory.

Some of his statements may, however, puzzle a serious reader, they may appear to contradict each other. But considered in their proper context, in the light of the nature of the audiences to which they were addressed, they are well understandable, the apparent contradictions are indeed reconcilable. For instance, Swamiji states that only the Formless can be real. (p. 5). We had thought the Supreme Reality could not be limited to formlessness or formfulness; as the very life of Sri Paramahansa and his teachings reveal. Can the formless Infinite have form? The Universe is a challenge and does not brook a reply in the negative. But why, Swamiji himself answers the question elsewhere (p. 72). 'Why should I preserve these eyes?' he asks, and answers 'to see the perennial beauty of God'.

THERE have been few minds in modern times more original or more undaunted in their search after Truth than was that of the Swami-Ramakrishnananda. For him the sweep of science was limited only by the boundary lines of creation; and the consuming desire of his later years was to discover and make demonstrable the actual point of connection between the science of the outer phenomenal world and of the inner realm of spirit, that saint and scientist might join hands and recognise themselves brothers. His highly developed intellect enabled him to analyse both nature and man into their finest constituent parts, while his deep spiritual realisation made it possible for him to gather up all these parts into a new and truer unity. Wherever his thought rested, there came a flash of new understanding for all those with whom he shared it. His manner of teaching was childlike

in its simplicity and unobtrusiveness; yet no one who had the blessed privilege of sitting in the dimly lighted hall of the Mylapore Monastery at Madras, listening to his profound words, can ever forget the glow of satisfaction felt in the heart as he unfolded an ever deeper knowledge of the universe and the soul.

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